GMA to serve until 2007 only, says Jose de Venecia

Story below, Col. 1

Landing on Mars draws cheers, hugs and tears

PASADENA, California—Nasa scientists literally jumped for joy here Saturday (Sunday in Manila) when they heard a signal from the Spirit rover indicating that it had survived a jarring landing on Mars.

With that, Nasa has accomplished the most difficult part of its Martian adventure, landing the first of two twin robots

LANDING/ A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

'Just give me tea,' says 98-year-old survivor

BAM, Iran—An elderly woman rescued from the rubble of the Bam earthquake said on Saturday she had been kept alive by God and after eight long days freezing and without food or water had just one humble request—a cup of tea.

Shahrbanou Mazandarani, believed to be in her 90s, became an instant celebrity after she was found by soldiers who

'JUST/ A17

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Monday, January 5, 2004 ★★★ 48 pages / 5 sections / vol. 19 / no. 28 P15
website: www.inq7.net

Big chill in Erap-FPJ ties

He can win with or without me; I may not be needed any more–Estrada

By Volt Contreras, Carlito Pablo and Jerry Esplanada

"JUST politics" may have caused a strain in the close friendship of deposed President Joseph Estrada and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Estrada himself insisted nothing had changed between the two movie idols, but his words and actions hinted at deep disappointment over Poe's recent controversial decisions.

"Although I don't agree with some of his choices, I fully respect his decision," Estrada told the Inquirer.

But Poe's choice of Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda as running mate was something "my leaders cannot swallow," Estrada said in Filipino.

In a previous interview, he exuded confidence that Poe "can win with or without me," but yesterday Estrada repeated the phrase with a tinge of bitterness. "I may not be needed anymore because with or without me FPJ can win," he said in his detention quarters in Camp Capinpin.

"People are consulting me, but I told them to go to FPJ," he added.

The choice of Legarda has upset many pro-Estrada supporters, who remember

BIG CHILL/ A9

Miriam may join GMA

GMA Senate slate ticket of reconciliation

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE NEW alliance to replace the administration's People Power Coalition has taken on the character of a "reconciliation ticket" as diehard supporters of ousted President Joseph Estrada were yesterday hurriedly drafted into the senatorial lineup of President Macapagal-Arroyo in time for the deadline for the filing of candidacy certificates today.

Opposition senators Rodolfo Biazon and John Osmeña and former senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago were yesterday added to the administration senatorial slate in frantic, last-minute negotiations to beat the deadline today, ranking administration officials involved in the talks said yesterday.

"This is a reform and reconciliation ticket because it truly cuts across political borders," said a Malacañang official.

Another Palace official said the three oppositionists' jump into the administration camp was to be sealed last night.

But an official privy to the negotiations said Santiago's shift to the administration may still not push through because of a supposed last-minute offer from Sen. Ping Lacson for her to be his vice presidential running mate.

As of 7 p.m. last night, a Malacañang official released this list of the administration senatorial candidates and why they were chosen: Sen. Robert Barbers for peace and order and Mindanao; Sen. Robert Jaworski as pro-life and pro-nature; Mar Roxas for industry and investment; Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon for tourism;

MIRIAM MAY/ A8

JOHN OSMEÑA

BIAZON

SANTIAGO: Will she or won't she? Talks with Lacson to decide.

BARBERS

JAWORSKI

ROXAS

MERCADO

PIA CAYETANO

PAROUK HUSSIN

REVILLA

LAPID

GORDON

Miriam on Poe: So new, so raw and so lost

By Jerry Esplanada

IT WAS vintage Miriam all over again.

Hours after arriving from a US vacation, feisty ex-senator and ex-presidential candidate Miriam Defensor-Santiago ignited a verbal pyrotechnic display.

Saying "the opposition no longer exists," she told the Inquirer she was seriously considering joining the administration ticket in the May elections. "It's now a possibility."

Taking aim at the acknowledged leader of the opposition, she said: "Clearly, if (Fernando) Poe (Jr.) becomes president, Sen. Edgardo Angara will be the surrogate president of our country."

Blasting Poe's choice of Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda as running mate, Santiago belittled Poe's decision-making process. "FPJ revealed his fatal flaw," she said. "So new, so inexperienced and now so lost."

She also questioned the right of Poe and Legarda to represent the opposition. The two were "not opposition,"

MIRIAM ON POE/ A8

Twins get gifts from strangers

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Gifts wrapped in the colors of Christmas sent by total strangers from around the world gladdened the hearts of 21-month-old conjoined twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre of Silay City, Negros Occidental.

Over the holidays, their mother Arlene and the boys were visited by groups of Filipino nurses at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM) in New York City where Carl and Clarence have been staying since they arrived on Sept. 10, 2003.

Members of the Manhattan chapter of the El Shaddai along with residents of the Filipino community living in Westchester visited the Aguirre family

TWINS/ A17

'TRANSITION PRESIDENT'

Gloria until 2007 only, says JDV

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

EVEN BEFORE she files her certificate of candidacy, President Macapagal-Arroyo has reportedly already agreed to serve only as a "transition President" until 2007.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. told the Inquirer last night that Ms Macapagal yesterday gave the go signal to proceed with Charter change through a constitutional convention.

"The President is agreeable to presiding over the transition and to shepherd this wide-ranging political reform," De Venecia said.

He said the House of Representatives, which earlier approved a resolution for Charter change through a constituent assembly, was now agreeable to a constitutional convention, the mode preferred by the Senate.

The campaign for Charter change was stalled after the Senate opposed the House idea that the two chambers constitute themselves into a constituent assembly to undertake the amendments.

De Venecia said the House and the Senate can approve the calling of a constitutional convention when Congress resumes sessions on Feb. 9.

He said the 212 convention delegates, representing the country's 212 congressional districts, can be elected simultaneously in the May elections. This would save the government a lot of money, he said.

De Venecia said the constitutional convention would convene by August 2004 to write a new Constitution that would provide for a parliamentary system with a unicameral legislature.

He said the shift to a parliamentary system could then take effect in 2007.

Asked why Ms Macapagal who if elected would legally serve until 2010, suddenly agreed to become a transition President, De Venecia said: "Because she's a genuine reformer. Otherwise it will be the same story. The people are fed up with the political poison in the air and gridlock in the legislative branch."

He denied that Ms Macapagal was afraid she might lose to move star Fernando Poe Jr. and was making this move to undermine the opposition's chances.

Drinking, obesity cutting sperm count, says UK study

OKEY LANG! HIK! ISANG SPERM LANG NAMAN ANG KAILANGAN KO! HIK!

LONDON—Male sperm count have fallen by almost a third since 1989, with factors such as drinking and obesity possibly to blame, according to a British study released last week.

A survey of 7,500 men who attended the Aberdeen Fertility Center in northern Scotland between 1989 and 2002 brought alarming findings, researchers said.

Analysis of sperm samples showed that in men with what is considered a "normal" concentration of sperm—defined as over 20 million sperm per milliliter of semen—the average sperm count fell by 29 percent.

This "must cause some concern and needs to be explained," said Dr Siladitya Bhattacharya, who led the research project.

"There could be a number of lifestyle factors which could play a role in this," he said.

DRINKING/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/05/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

15 killed, 50 hurt in Mindanao blast

By Rosa-May V. de Guzman, *PDI Mindanao Bureau,* and Christian V. Esguerra

AT LEAST 15 people were killed while 50 others, including Mayor Vivencio Bataga, were wounded after a powerful homemade bomb exploded in a Parang, Maguindanao gymnasium yesterday.

The explosion occurred in the packed gym at about 4 p.m. just after Bataga, who had survived three previous assassination attempts, finished delivering a speech.

"The mayor was returning to his seat when the bomb exploded," said Chief Insp. Danilo Bacas, acting investigation and intelligence chief of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao police.

Bacas said the bomb had been placed on a motorcycle parked near the gym where a basketball tournament was being held.

Bataga , a former Army colonel and a Christian, is seeking a second term as mayor of the largely Muslim town of Parang under the Lakas-CMD banner.

"People were crying. Others were shouting and running," said one basketball player who was wounded in the leg.

"That's all I remember because I lost consciousness."

Bacas said the police were still trying to determine a motive for the explosion.

Chief Insp. Salik Macapantar, director of the 1506th ARMM police mobile group, said they were also trying to determine the motorcycle's ownership.

Meanwhile, in Zamboanga City also yesterday a boy was killed when a bomb exploded, while in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, one person was killed and four others were wounded when a hand grenade accidentally exploded last Friday.

The military said the Maguindanao explosion appeared to have been politically motivated rather than an act of terrorism.

AFP Vice Chief of Staff Rodolfo Garcia said those who planted the bomb were most likely after Mayor Bataga.

"We're not completely ruling out the terrorism angle but the political motive is much stronger," he told the INQUIRER.

Among the identified victims were Mayflor Baldon, a nursing graduate, F02 Nasser Akmad of the Parang Fire Bureau, Salman Macarimbang, son of Barira town Vice Mayor Padian Macarimbang Jr.; Bryan Tomawis, Alonzo Batulan, Mariam Tomawis, Pamrona Tumawis and Maris Macauyag. Two others, a male and a female, remained unidentified as of press time.

Nelida, Baldon's mother, said her daughter was apparently close to the site of the explosion because the blast mangled her body.

Aside from Bataga, among those injured were SPO4 Gilbert Antonio and SPO1 Romeo Caupayan.

Garcia said most of the victims were rushed to Cotabato City where the AFP sent several military doctors to address the shortage of medical attendants there.

Other victims were brought to the Army's 6th Infantry Division hospital in Awang, Datu Obin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, he said.

In the Odin Sinsuat incident, Lt. Col. Fredesvindo Covarrubias, chief of the military's 4th Civil Relations Group, said the persons killed and wounded were apparently playing with the grenade when it accidentally exploded.

The explosion occurred late Friday in the house of Abu Nalud. He was killed instantly, Covarrubias said.

"Authorities are still investigating the incident and where the victims got the grenade," Covarrubias told reporters.

"Military reports suggested that Nalud was toying with the grenade when it suddenly exploded."

He said one person was briefly interrogated over the incident.

In Zamboanga City, a nine-year boy was killed when a bomb exploded in Barangay Boalan at around 10:30 a.m. yesterday.

Chief Insp. Jose Bayani Gucela, chief of the police's Explosives and Ordnance Disposal Unit, told the INQUIRER that the bomb, suspected to be of the same type used by wildlife hunters, exploded near the house of Efren Villado along Pablo Fernandez Drive.

The lone fatality was identified as Fredmor Ramos Falcasantos.

Villado told police he saw the boy playing with a rounded object which he put inside his pocket.

Floramae Falcasantos, the boy's mother, said her son was playing with some children when the explosion occurred. ***With reports from Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Reuters, AP, AFP***

A BASKETBALL player carries a wounded boy from the Parang, Maguindanao gym where a bomb exploded yesterday, killing at least 15 people. AFP

Bare stand on power rates, poll bets dared

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE MILITANT group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan yesterday dared candidates to make public their positions on energy issues, particularly those affecting the Manila Electric Co. which was allowed to raise power rates by 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour without prior public hearings.

Speaking for Bayan, Renato Reyes Jr. said in a telephone interview that the candidates should be aware that voters would be looking at their positions on issues such as the power rate increase.

"We are growing impatient with politicians from the administration and the opposition—which both have people who are associated with the Lopez group and thus, indirectly, with Meralco—for their seeming lack of concern for the interest of electricity consumers and the general public," Reyes said.

He said Bayan will launch a nationwide campaign on the power rate issue as part of its efforts to educate voters on electoral issues.

"Candidates who are resolutely against the rate hike will surely earn the respect of voters," Reyes said. "Those who choose to keep silent on the issue will be exposed as pro-monopolists."

Reyes said Bayan will ask the courts for an injunction to stop the rate hike should the Energy Regulatory Commission fail to suspend its implementation beginning this month.

In a Dec. 22 public hearing, the ERC denied a motion by nine consumer groups for the immediate rescission of a provisional authority (PA) granted to Meralco to increase power rates by 12 centavos beginning January.

Meralco had sought an increase of 13.58 centavos per kWh.

Aside from Bayan, the groups include the Martsa ng Bayan Laban sa Meralco, the Federations of Philippine Industries and of Philippine Textile Industries, Philippine Consumer Watch led by former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, Consumers Union of the Philippines, National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms, Freedom from Debt Coalition and Napocor Industrial Customers Association.

Outgoing ERC Chair Manuel Sanchez, who presided over the hearing, said the commission made a judgment call in issuing the PA, the wisdom of which would be determined in further hearings.

The ERC will start a series of public hearings on Meralco's petition on Jan. 12.

"That is what makes the PA ridiculous. Hearings are yet to be held yet the ERC had allowed Meralco a rate hike (in an order issued last Nov. 27)," Reyes said.

Leader of gang that killed Betti nabbed

By Christian V. Esguerra

A KEY leader of the gang believed to be behind the Betti Chua Sy kidnap-murder case was arrested at around 7 p.m. yesterday in Leyte.

Franco Artosa was picked up by local police in Barangay Macanip in Jaro, the same town were two of his fellow gang members were captured last week, said Chief Supt. Dionisio Coloma, Eastern Visayas police director.

Coloma said Artosa belonged to the inner circle of the Waray Gang and was present when Sy was snatched in Quezon City last Nov. 17

The suspect is scheduled to be flown to Camp Crame in Quezon City this morning.

This developed after three suspects arrested in Leyte in connection with the Sy case had expressed willingness to testify against their fellow gang members.

During interrogation, Fernando Niegos, Elisen Saliente and Leo Garrido gave police the names of the leaders and members of the notorious Waray gang, Coloma said.

"They've been very cooperative," Coloma told the INQUIRER.

He said the information provided by the three suspects enabled police to track the whereabouts of the Waray members.

"We now have a complete picture of the syndicate," he said in Filipino. "There are actually a lot of members but we now have a matrix of the group and its operations. It's just a matter of time before we get all the members."

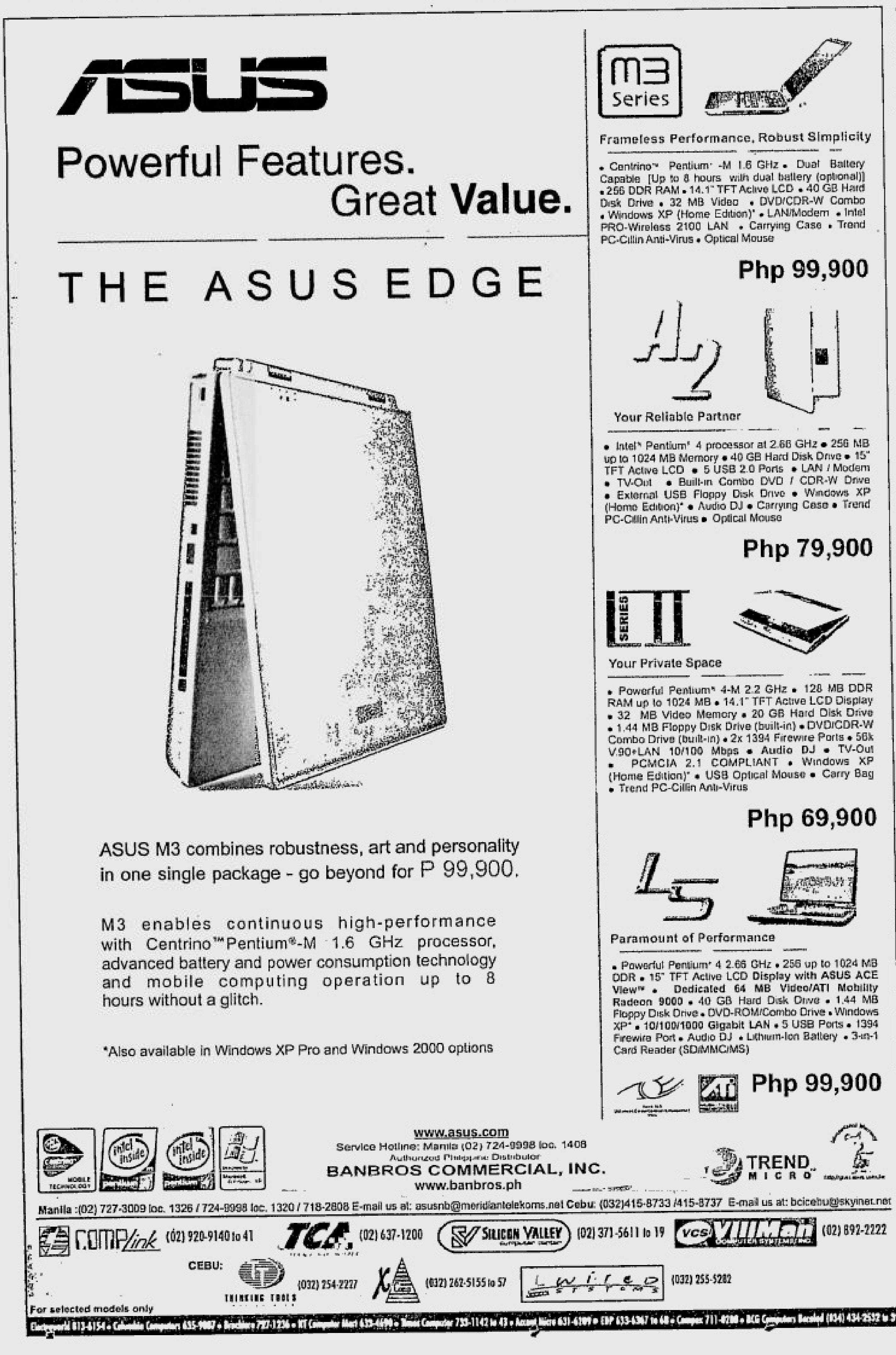
The Waray Gang, considered one of the most notorious kidnap groups in the country, was believed to be behind the abduction and killing of Sy, a Coca-Coca executive, on Nov. 17.

Not satisfied with the hit, the group allegedly snatched a 10-year-old Chinese-Filipino girl in Manila four days later and a 2-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in Muntinlupa the following week.

Both the girl and the boy were released after their families paid ransom.

Director Avelino Razon, police director for operations, said Niegos was a top leader of the gang headed by Allan Niegas, who was arrested last Dec. 4.

But Niegos and Garrido maintained that they were just "errand boys" assigned to look after kidnap victims. They denied participating in the Sy abduction but admitted that they were involved in the kidnapping of four Chinese nationals.



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'Jueteng' continues, say callers

DESPITE IT'S recent declaration that the country was now "jueteng free," the Philippine National Police continues to be flooded with complaints about the illegal numbers game being conducted in many areas, including Metro Manila.

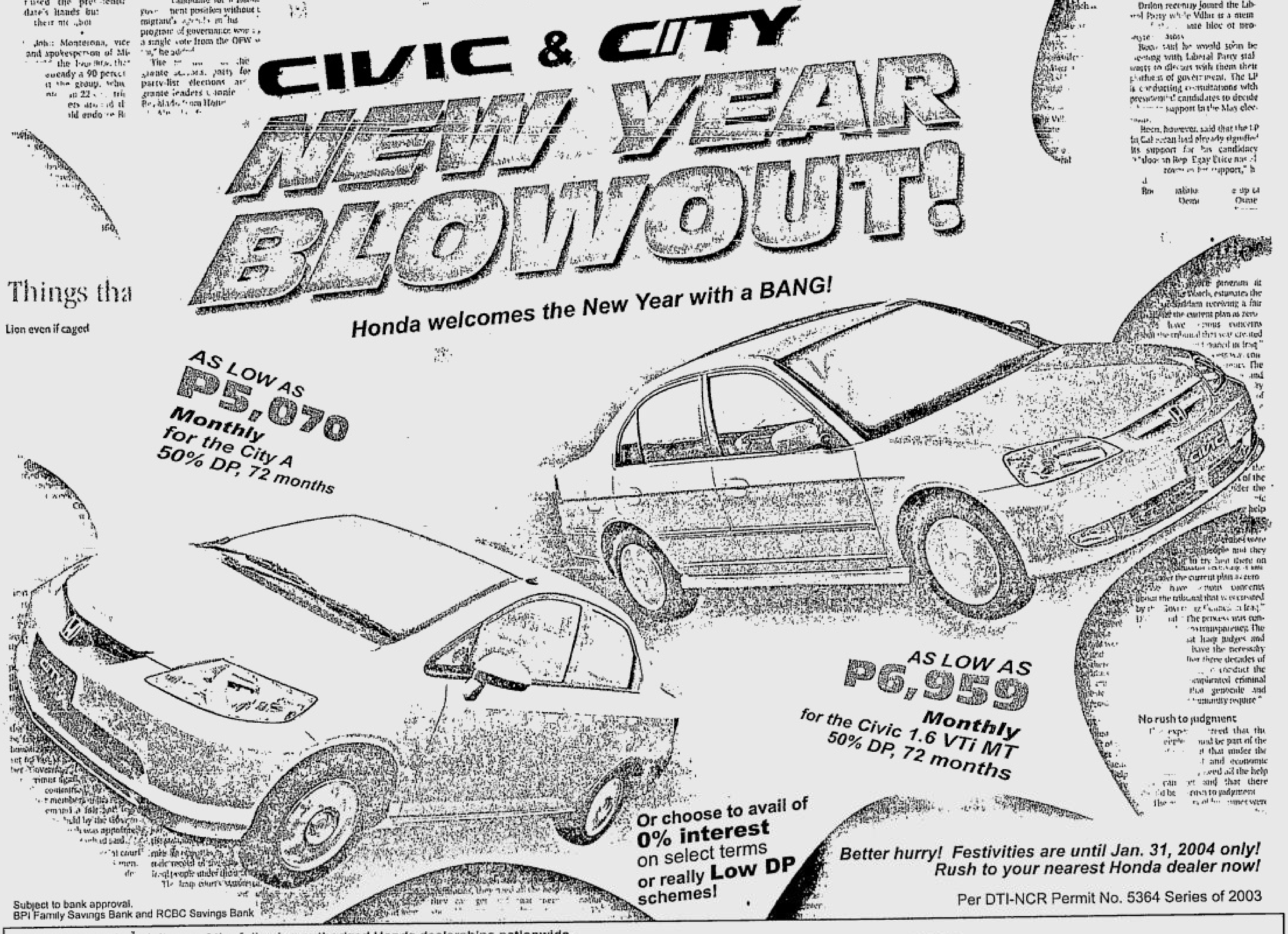
The bulk of the complaints have come in phone calls and text messages to radio programs. Some callers even went so far as to invite PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., architect of the renewed drive against jueteng, to come to their neighborhoods to see for himself that jueteng was still being played.

One report aired over dzBB yesterday said jueteng operations continued in Cainta and Taytay towns in Rizal. Another claimed a jueteng draw was even held in a San Fernando, Pampanga, restaurant the other night.

Director Avelino Razon, police director for operations, yesterday admitted the PNP had been receiving similar complaints through the 117 emergency number. All reports, he said, were referred to the different PNP intelligence units for verification.

Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, police information officer, said most of the callers referred to "guerrilla-type" jueteng operations, where draws are moved from place to place to avoid detection.

"We've been checking all these reports and most of them have turned out to be [negative]," Goltiao told the INQUIRER. ***Christian V. Esguerra***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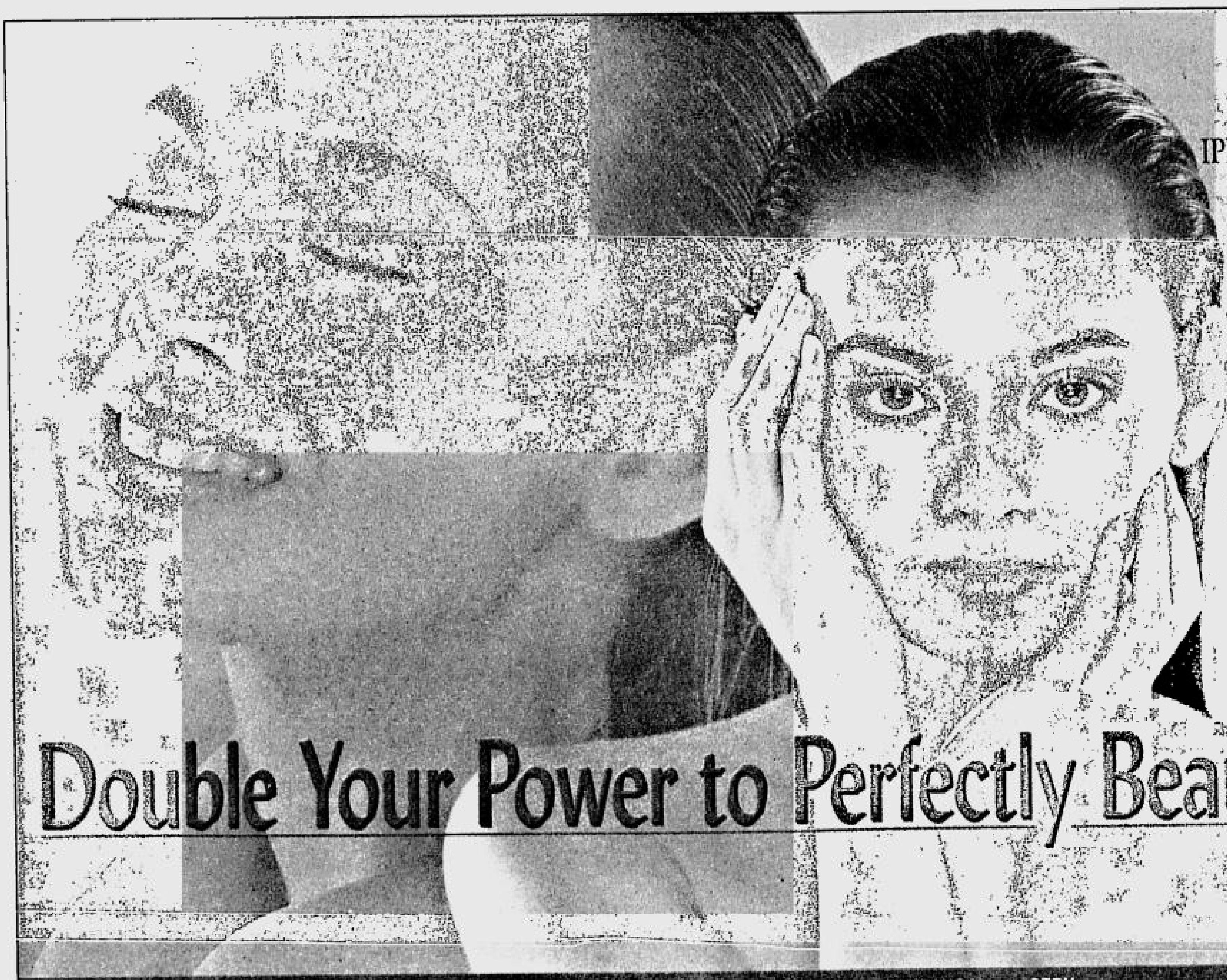
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Closer RP-US ties seen

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES could expect heightened and closer security and economic ties with the United States this year on "several separate but parallel tracks."

Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Ariel Y. Abadilla of the Department of Foreign Affairs said the Philippines and the US "are moving forward with an alliance that is stronger than it has been in a decade and are pursuing foreign policies that are more congruent today than a few years ago."

Speaking at a recent lecture on Philippine foreign policy in the 21st century, Abadilla noted that there was a "fresh tone" to the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

"Gone is the sense of inequality that stemmed from a perceived neocolonialist past," he said.

The Philippines and its leadership, the assistant secretary said, have demonstrated "not only a determination for the country to chart its own course, but also its ability to redesign its partnership with the US in a manner responsive to the needs and realities of our times."

Abadilla said the Philippines was sure to reap the benefits of a reinvigorated bilateral cooperation with the US aimed at enhancing development and capacity-building across a broad range of fields, from law enforcement to the management of remittance flows.

In the past year, the reciprocal state visits of Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo and George W. Bush, Philippine support for the US-led coalition in Iraq and intensified defense cooperation underscored the strong bilateral alliance between the two countries, Abadilla said.

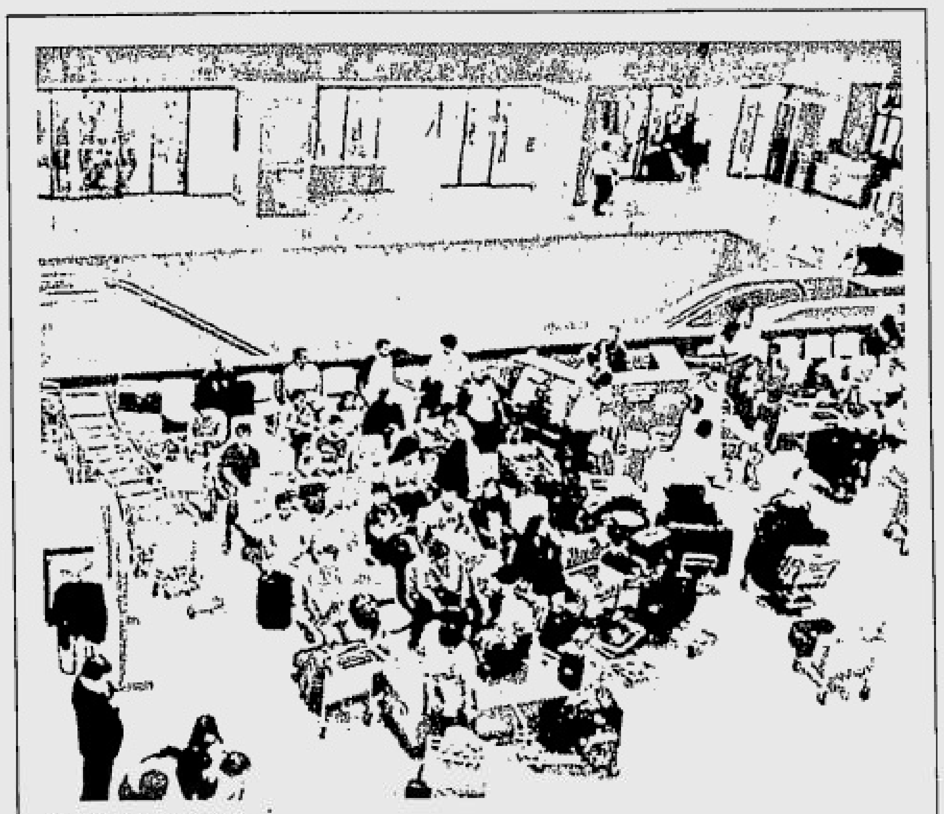
The Philippines, which was designated a major non-Nato ally by the Bush administration, is currently the largest East Asian recipient of US military assistance, he added.

The DFA official also cited American material and monetary aid in efforts to eliminate terrorism in Mindanao, to find a peaceful settlement to the armed conflicts there and revive development on the strife-torn island.

The US has committed to extend $30 million in economic assistance toward Mindanao development once a peace agreement is signed by the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and after the separatist group fully renounces terrorism.

The US assistance would be complemented by the US Agency for International Development's programs to help MILF fighters be reintegrated into civilian society, and the US Institute of Peace's support for the peace talks by lending its expertise in conflict management and resolution.

In Southeast Asia, Abadilla said the Philippines should not only cooperate with its neighbors but also with the US—the world's remaining superpower—when dealing with flash-points such as the Korean peninsula, the South China Sea area and the China-Taiwan issue.



QUICK ACTION
Days after the INQUIRER ran a photo of a new upscale coffee shop taking up a portion of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport lobby (top of photo), the area was cleared of tables and chairs, although the crowds outside Terminal I have hardly dissipated due to the exodus of overseas Filipino workers returning to their jobs abroad. ROGER MARGALLO

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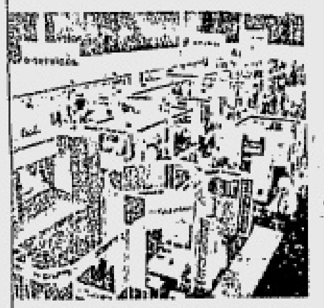
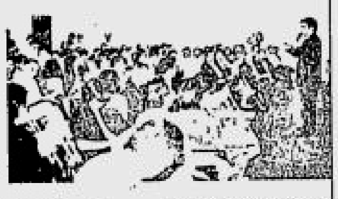
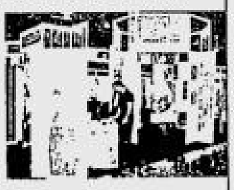


Local and foreign visitors and trade delegates are expected to tour exhibits in five key e-Services sectors: contact centers and other business process outsourcing centers, software development, design and engineering, medical and legal transcription services, animation and graphic design, and web design and development. These sectors are the fastest growing in the Philippine economy today - contact center seats double every year, for instance - in large part because of the success of e-Services Philippines in showcasing the best in Philippine standards of product and service quality, efficiency, and productivity.

This year, an international e-Services conference will take place concurrent to the exhibit, and will feature international experts and practitioners in e-Services. They will evaluate what's happened so far, where these sectors are going from here, and what needs to be done to maintain the synergy.





International delegates will attend e-Services Philippines 2004 because it is the most efficient, effective way to meet and network with e-Services sector leaders. To many of these visitors, if a company isn't visible at e-Services Philippines, it's not a player. If your organization is leveraging these fast-growing sectors and you intend to be a player, then you should make reservations now to participate in e-Services Philippines 2004, and showcase what you have to offer the world's leading contractors and purchasers of e-Services.

Reservations are already being accepted, and selection of exhibit space is on a first-come, first-served basis. To get the space you want, complete and fax in your reservation form today.

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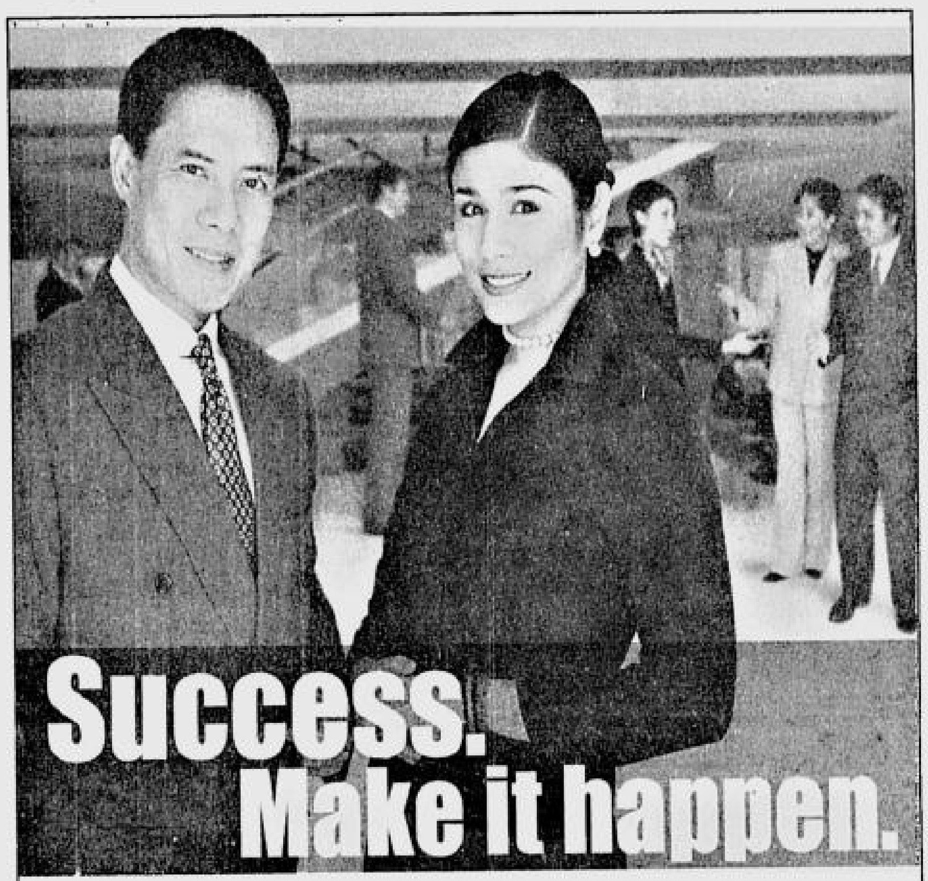

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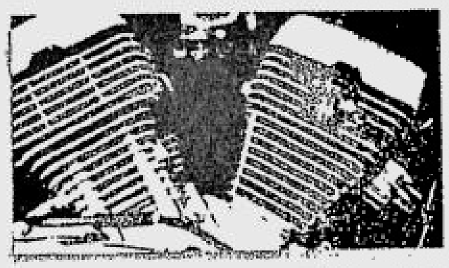

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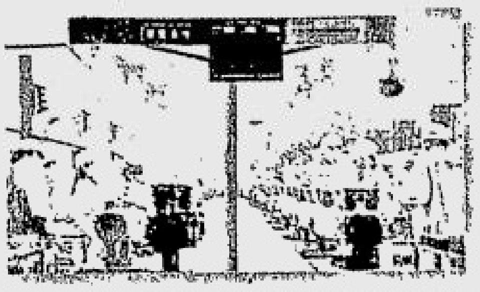

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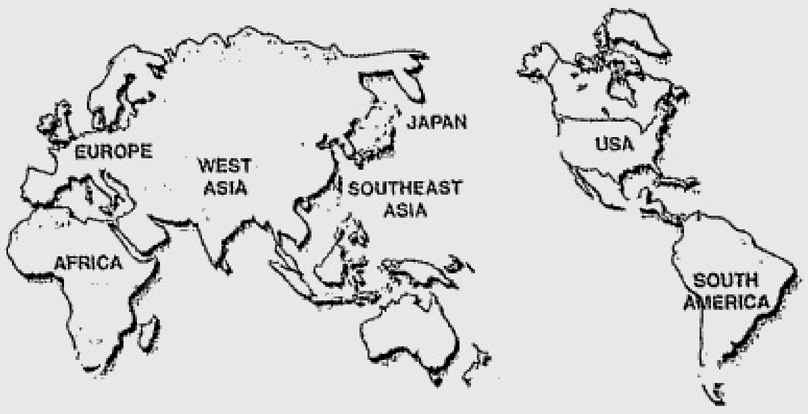
- It has 10 major manufacturing facilities, 8 in China, 1 in Vietnam and 1 in India producing the same high quality motorcycles and motorcycle engines.



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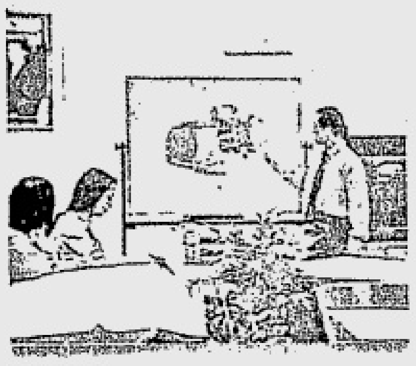

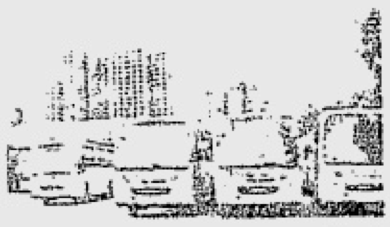

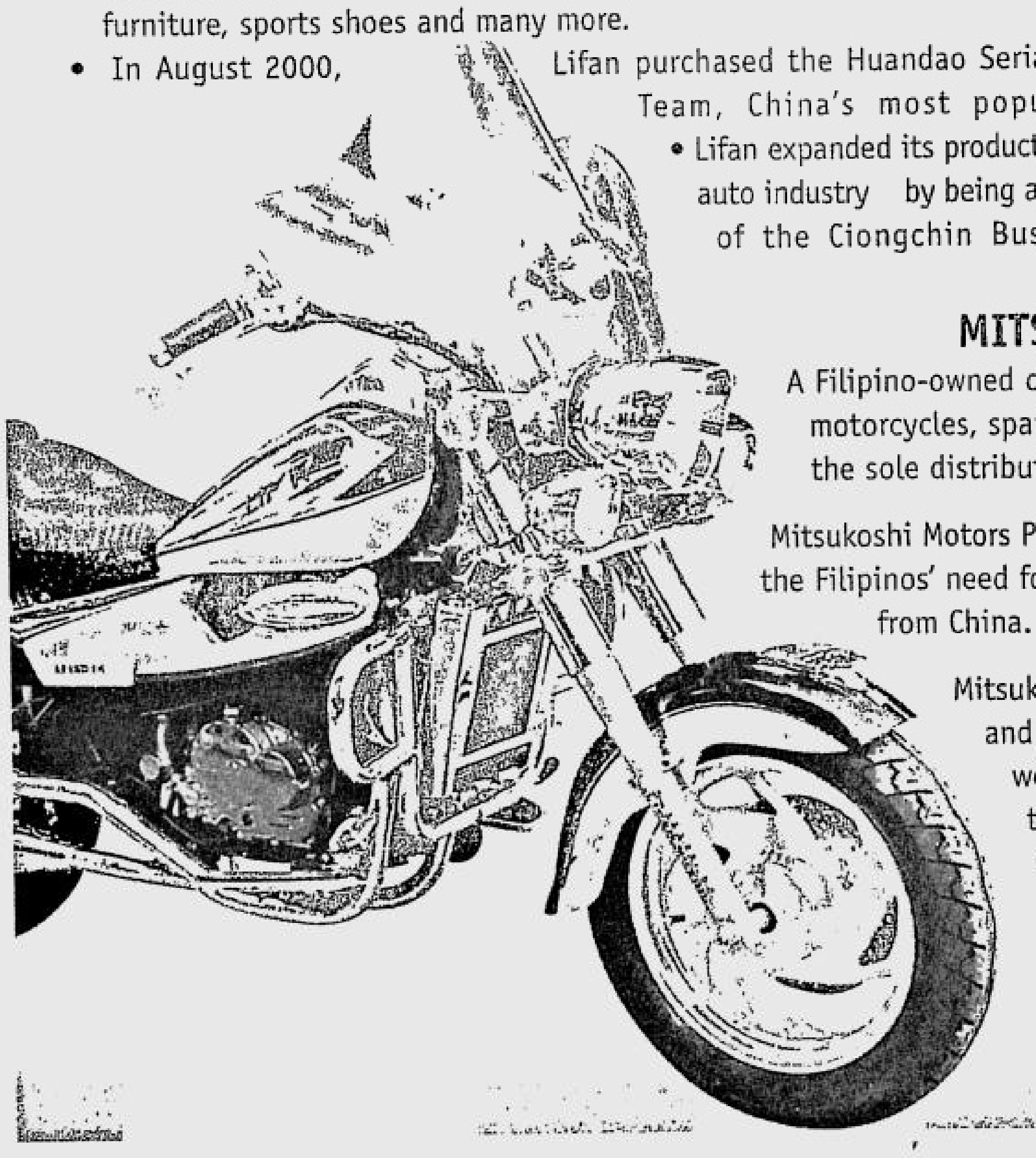

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Fund lack hampers DENR reforestation effort

By Christine Gaylican

LACK OF funds is seriously hampering the reforestation program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, raising concerns that similar landslides that hit Southern Leyte and nearby provinces before Christmas could occur in other areas of the country with insufficient forest cover.

"The DENR has no real budget for reforestation. What is being given by the National Treasury is just for the maintenance of our office and salaries for our workers," said Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun in an interview.

Gozun said the killer landslides that recently swamped towns in Southern Leyte and Surigao del Sur would hopefully prod the government into increasing the DENR's budget to help save the country's remaining forests.

Data culled from the DENR showed that foreign loans from multilateral donors such as the Asian Development Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation have been the major source of funding for the country's reforestation program for the last five years.

And a Forestry Sector Loan from the ADB and JBIC amounting to some $70 million was set to expire on Dec. 30, 2003.

Temporary halt

"The expiration of the said loan will temporarily halt efforts for reforestation until the project has been assessed and negotiation for another loan is finalized," Reforestry Management officer-in-charge Norberto Tortoza said in an interview.

The ADB and JBIC loans have so far reforested 68,000 hectares of denuded lands since 1997. Some three million hectares of denuded or open areas are still targetted for reforestation under the loan program.

Gozun recently formed a seven-man task force to step up reforestation activities in areas prone to flooding and landslides.

The task force will work in close coordination with local senior DENR officials and community environment officers who operate directly at the barangay level.

Comprehensive plan

The move came after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the DENR to map out a comprehensive plan for the immediate reforestation of Southern Leyte and nearby provinces recently affected by massive landslides which claimed the lives of hundreds of people.

Gozun will personally head Task Force Reforestation whose members include the heads of the Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau, Environmental Management Bureau, Forest Management Bureau including the National Authority for Mapping and Research Information Authority (Namria).

"The task force shall be on top of all reforestation activities in flood and landslide prone areas and shall see to it that all DENR regional offices submit regular updates on reforestation activities in said areas," Gozun said.

Gozun likewise stressed that the task force will coordinate with Phivolcs and Pagasa to update the DENR's list of disaster prone areas.

Vulnerable sites

Among the vulnerable areas in the initial list of the DENR are those located near main watershed tributary systems feeding seven major river basins in the country. These are the Cagayan River Basin, Agno River Basin, Pampanga River Basin, Bicol River Basin, Ilog-Hilabangan River Basin, Agusan River Basin, and the Cotabato River Basin.

Based on DENR's Disaster Preparedness and Management Plan, the department needs to monitor the main watershed areas in the country located in the provinces of Mt. Province, Benguet, Cagayan, Ifugao, Isabela, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan, Albay, Camarines Sur, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Davao, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Bukidnon, North Cotabato, South Cotabato and Maguindanao.

Among the highly eroded provinces in the country are Batangas, Cebu, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Batanes, Masbate, Bohol, Abra, Iloilo and Cavite.

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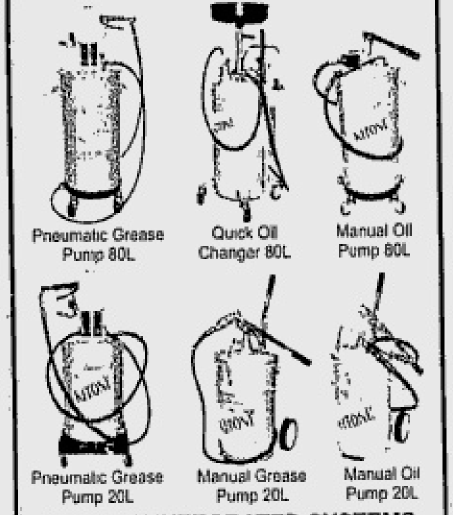

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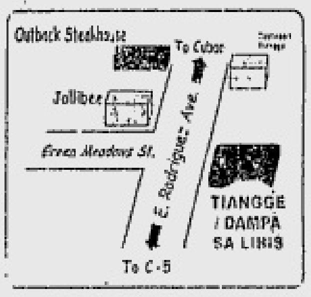

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Asians top Koran-reading tilt

COTABATO CITY—Southeast Asians, including two Filipinos, have dislodged Arabs as the best readers in the three-decade old International Koran Reading Competition, the Office of Muslim Affairs announced over the weekend.

The top prize in the competition held late last month in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, immediately after the fasting month of Ramadan, went to Ahmad Faizul bin Ghazzali of Malaysia, while Ahmad Khairi Lubis of Indonesia placed second.

Filipinos Muhammad Uka, a native of Datu Piang, Maguindanao, clinched third place in the male category, while Rahma Zacaria of Basilan won third prize in the female category, according to OMA Undersecretary Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan.

Ampatuan said the competition proved the prowess of Southeast Asians in the prestigious competition participated in by 42 countries in Central and Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Arabs, in whose language the Koran was written, failed to win in any category of the reading contest.

OMA officials said participants had included in their preparation for the event the recital of the Suratul Maryam (The Verse on Virgin Mary), Chapter 19 of the Islam's Holy Book, which narrates the story of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

The contestants, Ampatuan said, were judged based on voice, timing and proper pronunciation of the Koran's classic Arabic verses. *Nash B. Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Pinoy's assailant charged

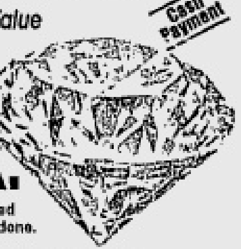
SINGAPORE—A 21-year-old Singaporean has been charged with the New Year's Eve murder of a Filipino and could face the death penalty if convicted, police said yesterday.

Shawn Hoh Mingzhou was charged with murder in Singapore's Subordinate Court Friday, said police spokesperson Debbie See.

Hou is accused of slashing 35-year-old Antonio Austria in the neck during the early hours of New Year's Day at a pub where the suspect was a bartender. Austria was taken to a hospital where he died an hour later, a police statement said.

Hou was arrested later the same day, See said.

See said Hou could face the death penalty if convicted, as Singapore mandated capital punishment for murderers in 1975. *AP*



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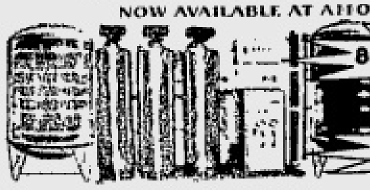

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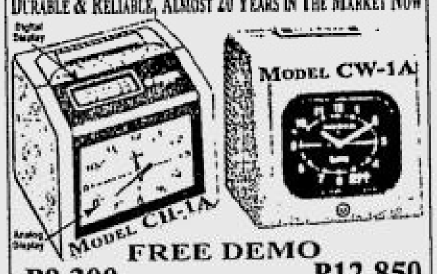

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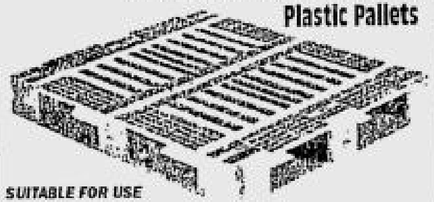

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Miriam may join GMA; John O, Biazon in

From page A1

Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid for his role in handling the *lahar* devastation in Central Luzon; Ramon "Bong" Revilla for having "proven effective in fighting piracy"; Pia Cayetano, as a young urban professional, mother and lawyer; Orlando Mercado as a "true statesman who faded away from politics but is nevertheless needed for the future"; Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a pro-poor, housing advocate who also pushed for agricultural safety net; Sen. John Osmeña for energy and telecommunications; ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin to represent the Muslims; and former senator Miriam Santiago as a "constitutionalist and one of the vital links toward true reconciliation." *(See related story on Page A1.)*

10 a.m. list-up

The administration candidates, led by the President and her running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, are to formalize their candidacy at 10 a.m. today after a four-hour prayer vigil and a mass at the Manila Cathedral and a program at Plaza Roma, where the new administration coalition is to be launched.

"We have a top-caliber senatorial slate," said Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, the President's campaign spokesperson.

Lakas Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. said the new administration coalition will be called K4, or the Koalisyon sa Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan.

Pichay said the coalition member parties are the ruling Lakas-CMD, the Liberal Party, members of the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, and independent political figures.

Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano said the new alliance will "highlight experience, platform, performance, principle and vision."

Vision, platform

"The Edsa II coalition of PPC was formed for good government, while the 2004 coalition is based on vision and platform," Cayetano said.

The maneuvering to recruit Santiago, Biazon and Osmeña in pursuit of Ms Macapagal's "healing and reconciliation" theme has apparently afflicted her own team with the same problem bedeviling the opposition.

It led to Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, one of those already assured of a slot in the administration slate, opting to drop out of the race.

Alvarez ballistic

According to another official, Gordon could still be "dislodgeable" because Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez was still intent on being part of the slate.

An aide quoted Alvarez as saying that Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. had called him to say that "everything he heard is not final" and that the President "insists that he should be in the list."

Alvarez, who thought he had been assured of a place, said he would "strongly reconsider" whether he would still want to be included in the slate because of his "misgivings" over the inclusion of Santiago, Mercado and Osmeña.

"These are the people who defended Estrada and said that Edsa II was an error," he said.

No more balls

"I was hoping we would carry the spirit of Edsa II. Now it would look to the people like we have lost our balls or bearings," he said in a phone interview.

"I'm very much in pain. It will be difficult for me to be the spokesperson of a ticket where you cannot manifest the spirit of Edsa II," said Alvarez, who filed the impeachment complaint against Estrada.

Noting Ms Macapagal's call for reconciliation with Estrada's supporters, Alvarez said reconciliation should be accompanied by contrition.

"I'm not crying for blood, but I'm crying for a fair trial," he said.

He denied that he was being excluded because of his poor ratings, noting that some of those included did not even rate in surveys.

A Palace official also said former senator Ernesto Herrera had defected to the opposition because he was slighted that his own party—he was vice president for the Visayas—gave priority to Mercado, one of Estrada's former officials and allies.

Obet withdraws

Pagdanganan said his family decided against his running again for a Senate seat. Besides, he said his son, Raymond, was already running for vice governor of Bulacan.

He said he would stay on at the Department of Agrarian Reform and help the President in the campaign.

Earlier yesterday, Osmeña, who had been drafted by opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for the opposition lineup, announced that he had accepted an administration invitation to run as a guest candidate in Ms Macapagal's team.

John O's letter

His office released to the media a letter that he had written to the President in which he indicated that he was accepting because the administration coalition was supporting his advocacy for constitutional change and a shift into a federal system of government. **(See related story.)**

A Malacañang official said Ms Macapagal had spoken on the phone on Friday with Santiago, the fiery ex-senator who stood by Estrada during the jailed leader's failed impeachment trial. **(See related story.)**

The Palace official said the President also phoned Biazon, who late Saturday took his oath as a member of the Liberal Party, putting on hold his recent alliance with the Alliance of Hope of another presidential candidate, former senator Raul Roco.

Biazon in LP

Muntinlupa Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, the senator's son who joined the LP last month, said that since his father would become a senatorial candidate of the LP, he would be among the administration candidates if the LP were to throw its support behind Ms Macapagal.

"Wherever the party goes, I go," the senator said in a phone interview.

Defensor confirmed the LP was set to proclaim its "unanimous support" for Ms Macapagal at 7 p.m. last night at the Club Filipino.

Senate President Franklin Drilon confirmed the LP leaders were to meet last night to "decide on the party's alliance, whether it would be with the President or anyone else".

Miriam's connect

Sources said Santiago's entry into the administration ticket was engineered by Defensor, her second-degree nephew, and Santiago's brother, former Armed Forces chief Benjamin Defensor.

Gen. Defensor, one of the President's most trusted aides, is said to have asked his sister to join the administration as early as 2002.

Biazon in LP

Biazon last month went on indefinite leave from the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, complaining about the chaos in the party, whose members are split in their support for Poe and Lacson.

He then joined Roco's Alliance of Hope and was proclaimed as part of Roco's senatorial lineup.

Biazon said he joined the LP because the party supported his five "advocacies" that included his call for reforms in the Armed Forces.

Drilon, who joined LP only a month ago and became its chair, said Biazon's entry to the party "has been in the works for quite some time." and that he had been on top of the talks with Biazon.

The filing of certificates of candidacy ends today, with the President expected to file hers at the Comelec central office in Intramuros this morning, making her the 55th presidential candidate to apply.

GMA No. 55

Ferdinand Rafanan, director of the Comelec education and information department, said in a phone interview that the President would be the 55th presidential candidate to apply.

There are 13 vice presidential candidates and 35 senatorial bets who have already filed their certificates since the Comelec opened its doors to applications on Dec. 15.

Rafanan said filing of certificates would be accepted until midnight.

The Comelec en banc has been reviewing the certificates of nuisance candidates since last week, said Rafanan. The candidacies would be evaluated in batches. ***With reports from Christine Avendaño, Carlito Pablo and Blanche Rivera***

Miriam on Poe: So new, so raw and so lost

From page A1

she said. "The real opposition consists of President Joseph Estrada and all those who suffered for the conviction that the rule of law should be obeyed at all times."

Talks with GMA

Santiago met with President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday afternoon "somewhere" in Metro Manila. Before she did, she told the INQUIRER: "We're going to engage in exploratory talks. I have not committed anything yet. I will see her right after my meeting with President Estrada. *Magpapaalam lang ako ng maayos kay* (I will bid goodbye properly to) President Erap and then i will see her," she said.

Calling herself a "free agent," Santiago said she could "enter into an alliance with the administration or the group of (Sen. Panfilo) Ping Lacson, but I'm more inclined to join GMA's team."

"There's a great handicap in a Poe presidency," Santiago noted. In contrast, "GMA has already served as President for nearly three years. During that period she has constituted her learning curve and she is now ready to implement what she learned. If a new one comes in, that president will have to go through the whole three-year learning period all over again. The result might be disastrous to the country."

The usual suspects

Santiago said she left Poe's senatorial slate because she had no intention of being a part of "the coalition that is supposed to be called Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (the Coalition of United Filipinos), because with Poe's pick (Legarda), it should now be known as the Koalisyon ng Nag-iisang Pilipino (Coalition of a Lone Filipino)."

She also suggested that Angara was the real power behind Poe.

"(Angara) would be winding (Poe's) clock and we in the opposition will be his rubber stamp. Therefore, this will be a fight not between Poe and (Macapagal) Arroyo but between Angara and (Macapagal) Arroyo," she said.

In the May elections, "there'll be no issues except the usual suspects. We may as well just keep Arroyo since there'll be no meaningful change in government."

No real opposition

Protesting the KNP's "unilateral decision-making process," Santiago said "there is no more reason for me to remain in the opposition because there is no more real opposition."

Poe, she observed, "did not bother to bring in other opposition political parties during his decision-making process ... We in the People's Reform Party resent being treated like foot soldiers."

"I consider myself not bound by the opposition coalition anymore because my party was not even consulted. When he handpicked (Legarda) as his running mate he created a power vacuum," she said.

Santiago said "Poe chose Legarda because she is the personal choice of Angara who heads the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, mesmerized by the idea of a political machinery for himself."

In criticizing Poe's choice, Santiago further criticized Poe.

Crying lady

"He chose an established administration figure whose only claim to fame is her immortal screen image as a lachrymose actress crying for selfish joy during the impeachment trial of (then) President Estrada," she said.

Because of Poe's "naive desire for political success of any cause," she said Poe had "already succumbed to the Machiavellian principle that the end justifies the means."

Santiago emphasized that Poe and Legarda were "not opposition."

Demonized

"Neither Poe nor Legarda has any moral right to claim that they form an opposition ticket," she said as she also recalled "during and after the trial when people like me were interminably demonized for insisting on the rule of law, Poe was silent as the tomb and Legarda catered to her naked political ambition by nimbly cultivating the winning side at that time."

Santiago said could have supported Poe for president simply because he's new if he had picked a genuine opposition figure, preferably a reelectionist senator "who could have served to balance his total lack of experience in governance."

Not vice president

She claimed she was "not interested in being vice president to anybody."

"But when President Estrada nominated me I made myself available only in order to strengthen the opposition ticket. If my son (Alexander Robert) had not died, by September (2003) I would have left with him for a foreign campus where I would teach and he would study. I already made my mark as a presidential candidate in 1992 and the vice presidency is a nothing job as far as I am concerned," she said.

'Join me'

During Santiago's meeting with Estrada yesterday in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, Angara and ex-senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Francisco Tatad were also present.

There, Santiago pointed out that with the KNP's unilateral decision-making process, "the rule of law has been buried."

When she voiced out her opinion, she recalled, Tatad told the small group, "That's exactly the sentiment of everyone here."

Santiago quoted Enrile as telling her, "I will miss your company." She responded with a trademark quip. "You can join me when I see GMA this afternoon."

Drinking, obesity cutting sperm count, says UK study

From page A1

"It just highlights the need for research to discover what these reasons might be, as well as the need for further studies elsewhere in the country to see if they support our results."

Nuclear disaster

Drug use, alcohol, smoking and obesity have all been linked to a decline in sperm counts, as well as pesticides and other chemicals in the environment.

In 1986, Scotland was affected by the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, but Bhattacharya said it was "almost impossible" to say for certain whether this or any other individual factor was to blame.

Male fertility

It could also not be concluded that there had been a fall in male fertility, as factors other than just sperm count played a part, he added.

"There has been an increase in men seeking treatment for male infertility, but whether this is due to a significant increase in this condition or because men are more aware of new techniques which have been developed to help them, we cannot say." *AFP*

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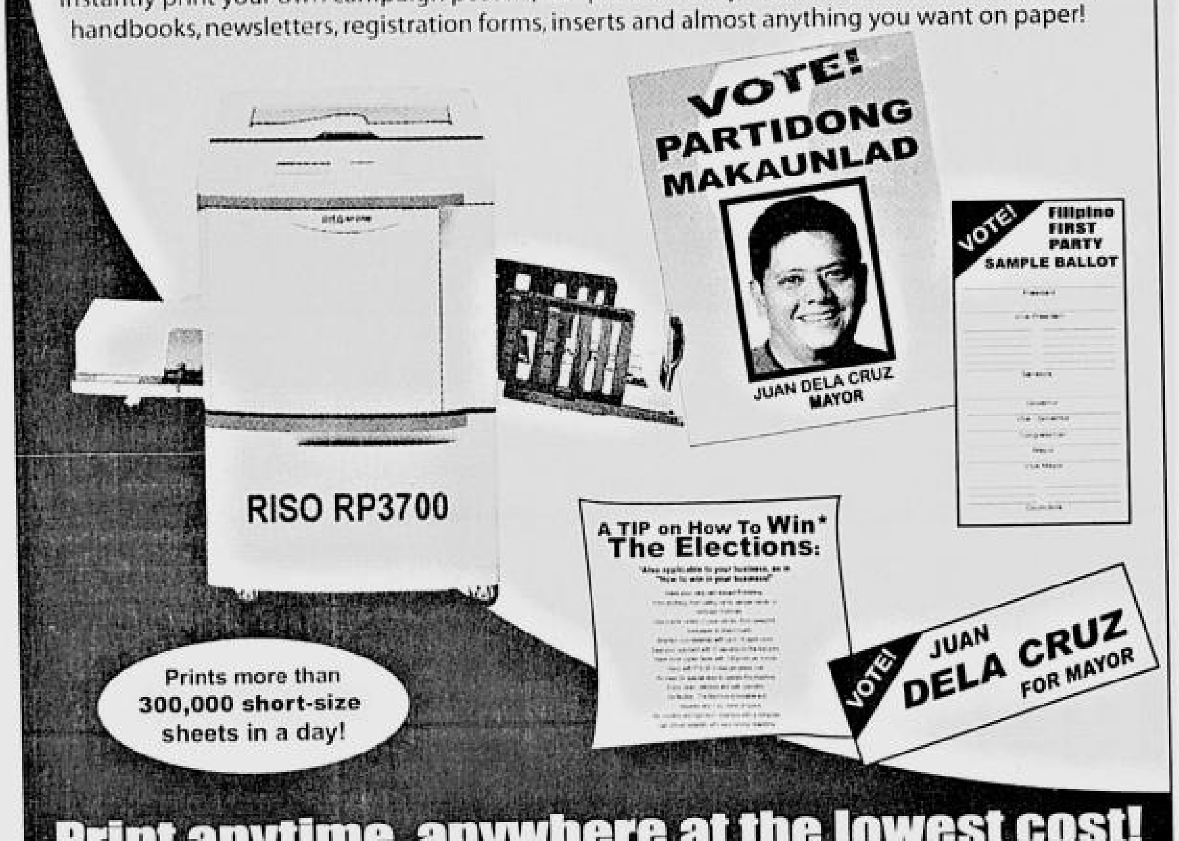
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GMA files CoC today with a show of force

NAGA CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo will file today her certificate of candidacy together with her political stalwarts from the provinces as a show of force and machinery of the Lakas-CMD party, Camarines Sur provincial chair Gov. Luis Villafuerte revealed yesterday.

Villafuerte said Ms Macapagal's force and machinery that is composed of political stalwarts from the provinces would be revealed tomorrow.

He said it would be unlike a star-studded affair but enough to intimidate other presidential aspirants with the big names from the provinces present during President Macapagal-Arroyo's filing of her CoC this morning.

Villafuerte and the other five Bicol governors openly oppose the candidacy of fellow Bicolano presidential aspirant Raul S. Roco.

All the six governors have pledged their support to the presidential bid of Ms Macapagal.

The governor, Roco's political opposition in Camarines Sur, assailed the Bicolano presidential aspirant's bid in the highest elective post as a paper tiger caricature without sound political machinery. *Juan Escandor, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

OPPOSITION STANCE

Now, Loren gripes about high power cost

By Christine O. Avendaño

FROM one foe to the other.

Vice presidential aspirant Sen. Loren Legarda decided to keep quiet yesterday on criticisms hurled against her by supporters of Joseph Estrada for aligning herself with the opposition.

But the increasingly controversial runningmate of Fernando Poe Jr., issued a statement yesterday complaining about the high cost of electricity and seeking to bring it down, thus indirectly hitting her perceived political backers, the Lopez family.

Reform power law

The Lopezes are owners of the giant ABS-CBN network and the Manila Electric Company.

Sounding like an opposition candidate, Legarda, a news talent for many years of ABS-CBN where she gained prominence, prior to winning a Senate seat, said she would move to seek a review of the Electric Power Reform Act (Epira) when Congress resumes session in a few weeks.

Unfair provision

Legarda said that the law, which was approved in 2001 and amended last year, was "flawed" because "it only increased the financial burdens of the people without instituting any reforms that strengthened the power industry."

In a statement, Legarda said that Section 34 of Epira authorized the imposition of the power purchased adjustment (PPA) and the power purchased cost adjustment (PPCA) to finance payments to the independent power producers even though they had not generated the electricity.

"It is grossly unfair and unjust that the millions of electric consumers throughout the country should be made to pay for services that have not been rendered and products that have not been produced and consumed," she said. "This is especially criminal when you consider that 49 percent of our people live below the poverty level as declared by the Population Commission."

No Napocor buyers

Legarda also said government efforts to privatize the National Power Corp., has failed following the resignation of the head of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Corp. (Psalm).

She said Psalm is apparently finding it difficult in finding buyers of its assets "because of the low prospects of the power industry due to overcharging of the electric consumers."

Legarda also urged a review of the current policy of government of privatizing services like power, fuel and water.

Effects of privatization

She said she was not against privatization, as she stressed the need for a study of its effects to the people.

She said the high cost of power is among the causes listed by local and foreign business groups of the lack of competitiveness of the country's economy.

Ties that bind

Legarda issued the statement days after members of the opposition criticized her for aligning with them when she had help bring down the presidency of Estrada in 2000.

Estrada supporters the other day said aside from Legarda's ties with the forces that brought down Estrada, the senator also has to worry about her ties with the Lopez family, particularly on the issue of Meralco's profits from the PPA.

Big chill in Erap-FPJ ties

From page A1

RIGHT behind you, pal: Best friend Fernando Poe, Jr. stands with members of the Estrada family as he takes his oath of office at the Barasoain Church in Bulacan on June 30, 1998.

her role as the "crying lady" during his impeachment trial. Legarda, who voted to open the second Jose Velarde envelope, wept after Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. resigned as Senate President.

Aside from including Pimentel and ex-Congressman Ernesto Herrera, who co-authored the impeachment complaint against Estrada, Poe also dropped ex-Mayor Jinggoy Estrada from the Senate slate.

Friends for 4 decades

Asked if these decisions had affected his four-decade-old friendship with Poe, Estrada said: "*Wala naman* (Not really). This is just politics."

"*Wag n'yo naman kaming pag-awayin dahil di nyo kami kayang pag-awayin* (Don't make us fight, because we will never fight)," he said with a chuckle.

"Anyway, I'll be leaving for the States (to undergo knee surgery), so I won't be here in the heat of the campaign," he added.

But, reached for comment, one of the candidates on Poe's slate most closely identified with Estrada did not mince words. "Something's wrong with the (opposition) coalition."

Rep. Didagen Dilangalen (Maguindanao) described two recent developments as "very alarming."

One was the departure of ex-Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago from the coalition's senatorial slate, because she said she could not abide campaigning with Legarda.

Another is the resistance that hardline Estrada supporters were giving the Legarda candidacy, such that there is now talk that Legarda may be junked come election time.

"Loren is certainly one factor," Dilangalen said.

Dilangalen joined a lengthening list of politicians or political operatives closely identified with Estrada who have come out against Legarda.

Asked how the problems of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) could be resolved, Dilangalen said: "We're still talking."

The Legarda problem has compounded the division in the opposition, with Sen. Panfilo Lacson pushing ahead with his plans to run for president.

Lacson option

Santiago called up the INQUIRER at 4:30 p.m. yesterday to say that people close to Lacson "have been trying to contact me and convince me to be Ping Lacson's running mate."

"I didn't make any commitments. I just told them I'll think it over tonight," she said.

Santiago said Lacson's group was "apparently trying to form a new opposition coalition composed of (the) LDP faction of Ping Lacson, my party (the People's Reform Party) and (the) Puwersa ng Masa of former President Estrada."

"Again, I did not commit anything," she added.

A source in Lacson's camp said Estrada was trying to broker a Lacson-Santiago team-up. But reached for comment last night, Estrada denied he had done so.

"That's not true. That's something new and *wala akong alam diyan* (I know nothing about that)."

Earlier yesterday, Santiago had turned down the Lacson option outright, saying the former police general was "already hobbled by the lack of political machinery."

"Ping Lacson should not have fought within the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, his party," she said then.

Lacson's "running for president separately was a misjudgment because he has no political machinery," she added.

Forgive, forget

Poe's campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, yesterday urged supporters and members of the opposition to "forgive and forget the differences of the past and moved together to form a new government of unity and progress for the Filipino people."

"We urged them to forget the politics of the past and concentrate on the politics of the future," Sotto said in his statement.

"The individual members may have had political differences in the past based on their own perceptions of the issues then prevalent but now they are united in supporting the program for the uplift of the masses under the leadership of KNP presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.," he added.

To explain

In a phone interview, Sotto said KNP officials intend to talk with Estrada's supporters regarding Poe's choice.

"It's just a matter of explanation," he said.

Sotto urged supporters to extend support to Poe, who chose Legarda as his running mate.

Sotto also said that Legarda had shown herself to be a member of the opposition in the Senate, because "she has always sided with the minority."

Poe's supporters expressed hope that the supporters and leaders of the opposition would eventually unite behind Poe.

Only 'natural'

The Freedom, Peace, Justice Movement said it was only "natural for followers of different political parties and groups that have formed a coalition to pursue a common goal ... to have differences over individual candidates and policies at the beginning."

FPJM chair Manuel Portes said that KNP leaders and the FPJM are reaching out to all members and leaders of the opposition "to unite for victory in the 2004 election and leave behind their previous differences so that the KNP under the leadership of FPJ can topple the inept (Macapagal) Arroyo administration." *With a report from Christine Avendaño*

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

3 more GIs killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Insurgents have killed three US soldiers in separate attacks in Iraq, the American military said on Saturday, and a top commander warned that guerrilla assaults were growing more sophisticated.

A military spokesperson in Baghdad said two soldiers were killed and three wounded just south of the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Friday when a bomb was detonated as their patrol drove past.

At a US base near Balad, about 80 km north of Baghdad, one soldier was killed and two were wounded late on Friday in a mortar attack, a spokesperson for the 4th Infantry Division said in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

"The base came under mortar attack and one soldier was killed by shrapnel, while two others were wounded," Sgt. Robert Cargie told reporters.

He said six people had been detained in connection with the assault. The two wounded soldiers, who were taken to a nearby field hospital, were in a stable condition.

The attacks brought to 331 the number of US soldiers killed in action since the start of the war in Iraq.

News of the attacks came a day after guerrillas shot down an OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter outside the town of Falluja, west of Baghdad. It was the sixth US helicopter to be brought down by Iraqi insurgents since October.

A policeman who witnessed the crash said the helicopter was hit by a missile before falling to the ground. One pilot was killed and the other wounded. It was the first time a Kiowa, a nimble craft used for observation, had been shot down in Iraq.

US forces quickly surrounded the crash site to keep witnesses and journalists at bay.

American soldiers detained three Iraqis working for Reuters as they covered the aftermath of the crash. A Reuters driver working with the three said they had earlier been fired on by US troops as they filmed a checkpoint close to the site.

US Army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt separately told a news conference in Baghdad that guerrillas posing as journalists had fired on US soldiers guarding the area and four were later detained.

Kimmitt also said the number of guerrilla attacks was falling but warned they were getting more sophisticated.

He pointed to the New Year's Eve car bombing of a smart restaurant in central Baghdad, which killed eight people and wounded around 30 others, saying it was the first attack of its kind on a purely civilian target.

"We are seeing a small uptick in the capability of the enemy. They are getting a little more complex," Kimmitt said.

"For what reason, we don't know, but they are getting a little more sophisticated of late."

As part of operation Iron Grip, an ongoing effort to root out suspected insurgents hiding out in Baghdad, the 1st Armored Division used AC-130s and A-10 "Warthog" planes to bombard positions to the south of the city late into Friday night.

The sound of artillery, mortar bombs and fighter plane machineguns rattled over the capital for several hours, but the military would provide no details on the operation's results. *Reuters*

Britney weds childhood pal in Vegas, reports say

SPEARS

LAS VEGAS—Pop star Britney Spears marched down the aisle in Las Vegas, marrying a childhood friend from Louisiana, according to news reports.

The 22-year-old diva married Jason Allen Alexander early Saturday at the Little White Wedding Chapel on the Strip, according to People.com, the online arm of the Time Warner publication. He is from Kentwood, Louisiana, it said.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported on its website that Spears, 22, and Alexander, 22, were granted a marriage license, citing an affidavit of Application for Marriage License filed Jan. 3.

Calls to Spears' representatives were not immediately returned.

The bride wore jeans and baseball cap, according to People.com, and had a hotel bellman walk her down the aisle.

Spears released her fourth album "In the Zone" in November. It debuted at the top of the album charts. She begins a concert tour March 2 in San Diego. *AP*

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UK flight lands safely in US

BOGOTA—A top rebel commander believed to be the chief Marxist ideologue and key fundraiser for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has been captured in Ecuador and brought to Colombia Saturday.

Ricardo Palmera was seen by AFP being taken off a Colombian plane that brought him to a military base outside the capital. He was whisked into a prison van that was to take him to a prosecutor's office here.

Authorities from both countries termed his capture a major blow to the leftist guerrilla movement, Colombia's largest.

Colombian Defense Minister Jorge Alberto Uribe said the United States had provided "vital support" in Palmera's arrest, but did not elaborate.

President Alvaro Uribe predicted that Palmera's arrest would be the first of many setbacks for a rebel insurgency, which he said would eventually will be eradicated.

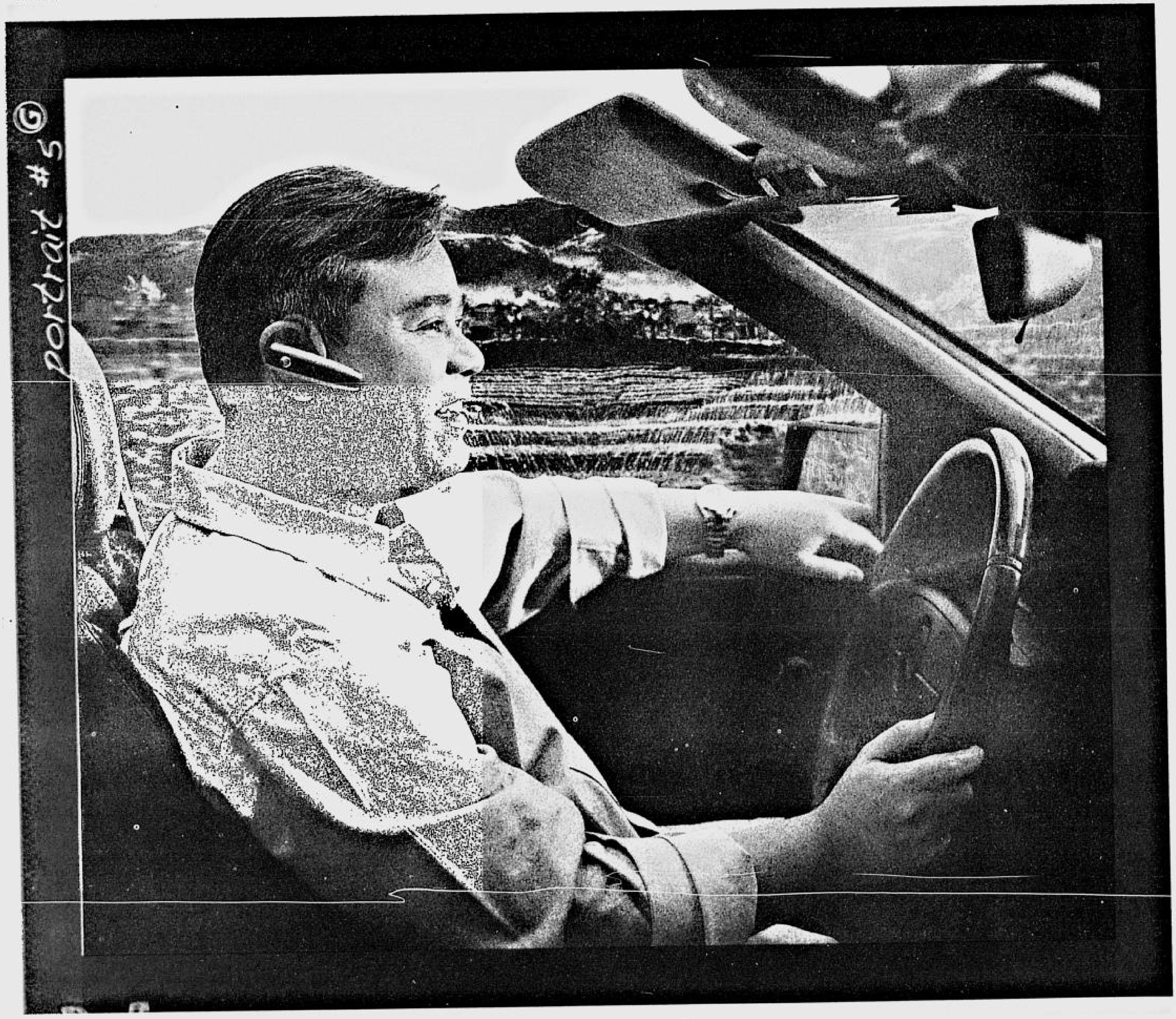
"The capture of a top FARC official shows that terrorism will never prevail" in Colombia, he declared after Palmera's capture in Ecuador but before his arrival here.

Uribe said he had telephoned Ecuadorean President Lucio Gutierrez to express "heartfelt thanks" for his country's cooperation in nabbing Palmera.

Gutierrez told reporters he was "trying to improve security between the two countries, and I hope this will be one more factor leading to a better understanding that the only path to follow is that of dialogue and peace, burying forever violence as a means of solving our differences."

Palmera, whose nom de guerre is Simon Trinidad, was transferred late Saturday from Quito to a military base in the southern city of Ipiales near Colombia's border with Ecuador, then flown to Bogota.

Palmera, 53, is a member of the rebels' inner circle. He commanded the Marxist group's Caribbean Bloc of fighters and represented the FARC in failed peace talks with the government from January 1999 to February 2002. *AFP*



Egypt rules out terror in Red Sea plane crash

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt—Egyptian and French officials rushed to exclude terrorism as a possible cause for Saturday's crash of a charter plane after it took off for Paris from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

"The incident is absolutely not the result of a terrorist act, but is linked to a technical failure of the plane," Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher said of the disaster that officials said killed all 148 people aboard.

In Paris, French Transport Minister Gilles de Robien said there was nothing to indicate that the cause of the crash was anything but an accident.

"We are largely working on the theory that this was an accident," de Robien told reporters. "Nothing indicates that there could have been any other cause."

The Egyptian navy and others were searching for the plane's black box flight data recorders in a search operation joined by Italian navy ships stationed in the Red Sea.

Maher said he had agreed during a phone conversation with French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin that the two countries would cooperate to determine the causes of the incident.

France's junior transport minister Dominique Bussereau said the plane had a problem at take-off.

"The plane had a problem at take-off and then tried to turn around, and it was at that moment that it apparently crashed," Bussereau told reporters before leaving for Egypt.

Egypt's tourism industry, the main source of foreign currency for the country, suffered a heavy blow in November 1997 when Islamic militants opened fire at a tourist site in Luxor, killing 56 foreigners.

A tourism industry official told AFP he was worried foreigners might cancel travel plans to Egypt during the peak season, even if the crash turns out to be an accident.

A senior police officer in Sharm el-Sheikh told AFP on condition he not be named that some witnesses had reported hearing an explosion in the pre-dawn hours but he said it was the result of the plane hitting the water. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

South Asia starts summit

ISLAMABAD—A landmark South Asian summit opened in Islamabad Sunday amid hopes it will pave the way for a free trade zone and propel peace moves between bitter nuclear rivals India and Pakistan. The 12th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was declared open by outgoing chairman, Nepal Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, in a tightly guarded ceremony at the city's Convention Center. The summit, the 18-year forum's first since January 2002 when India and Pakistan were on the brink of their fourth war, comes on the heels of two near-miss assassination attempts against President Pervez Musharraf last month. *AFP*

Parmalat probe

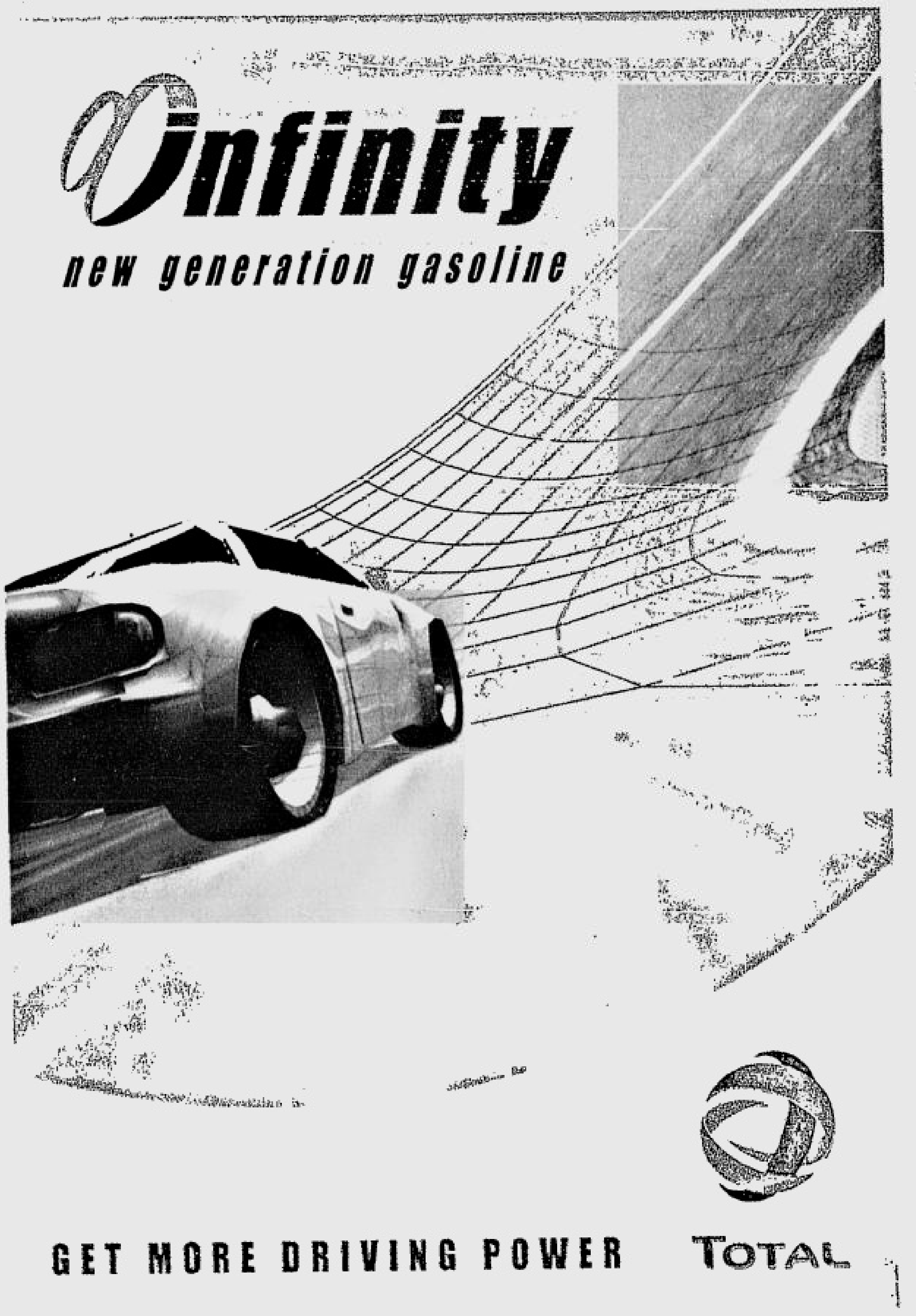
PARMA/MILAN, Italy—US and Italian justice authorities have launched a joint inquiry into food group Parmalat's operations on US financial markets, judicial sources said on Saturday as a multibillion-euro fraud probe grew. The transatlantic move in what is already one of Europe's biggest ever corporate scandals followed a search by police in New York of the apartment and office of Giampaolo Zini, a lawyer to former Parmalat chief Calisto Tanzi, the sources said. Tanzi and Zini are among the eight people arrested in the probe into what Italian prosecutors say was systematic fraud at the company dating back years. No charges have been brought. Parmalat's crisis exploded just over two weeks ago when its new management team revealed a four-billion-euro hole in its accounts, forcing the company to seek protection from creditors. *AFP*

Seoul IBM corruption

SEOUL—South Korean prosecutors said Sunday that 48 people have been indicted for bribery and other irregularities in a corruption probe involving the local subsidiary of US technology giant IBM Corp. The Seoul District Prosecutors Office said 12 people had been arrested and remanded in custody while 36 others were also indicted. It was the biggest corporate corruption case involving any foreign companies or subsidiaries doing business in South Korea. Prosecutors say the case shows deep-rooted corruption here between businessmen and government officials. The prosecution said officials at IBM Korea and its two sister firms—LG IBM and Winsol—bribed government officials or colluded with other firms to secure 66 billion won ($55 million) in contracts from government departments. *AFP*

4 Palestinians killed

NABLUS, West Bank—Four Palestinians were killed in the northern West Bank city of Nablus Saturday in clashes between Israeli troops and stone-throwing demonstrators, Palestinian medics and witnesses said. *AFP*



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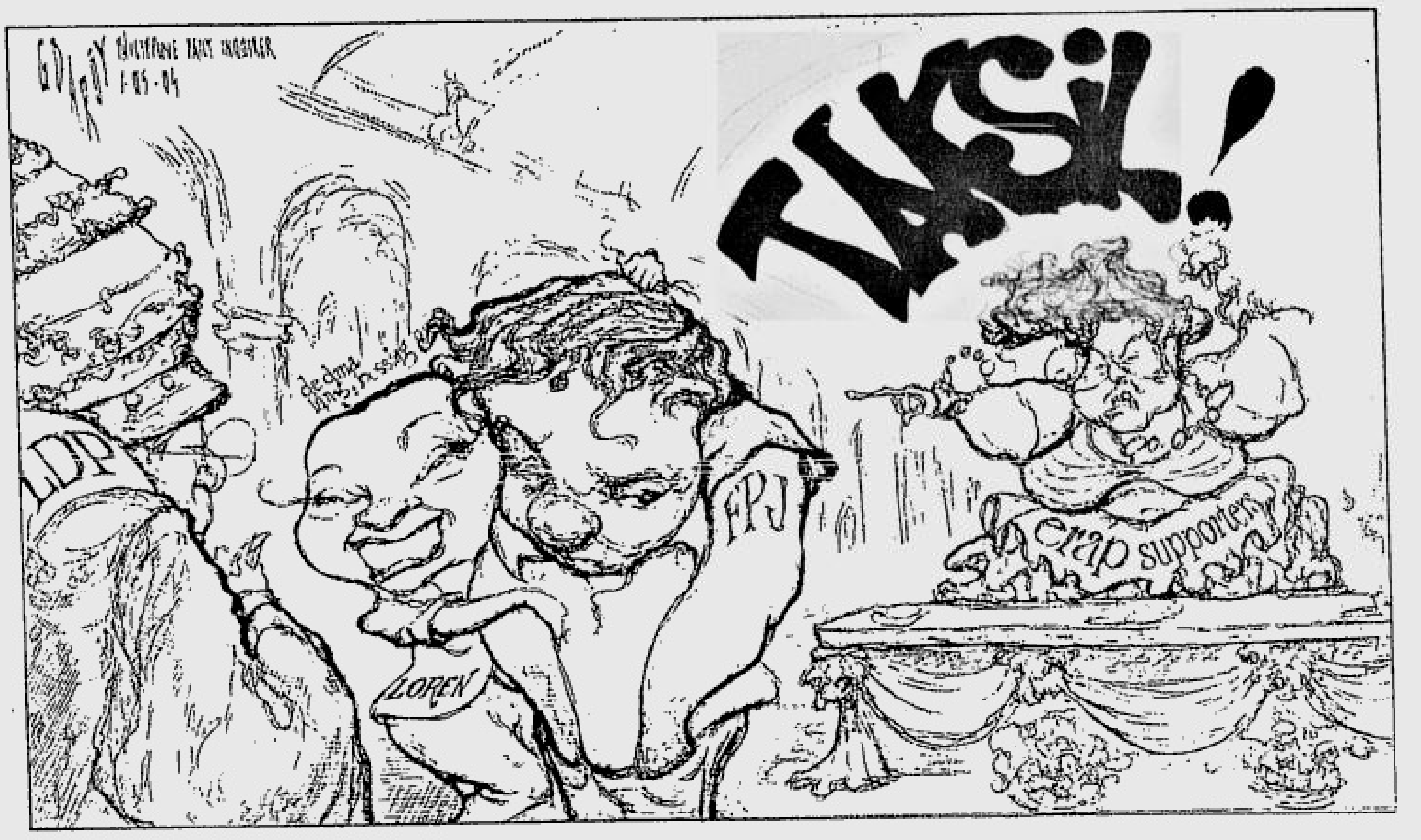

More contradictions

EDITORIAL

WITH ERSTWHILE oppositionist Miriam Defensor-Santiago joining the administration's Senate slate, politics in the country has taken a turn for the absurd. We can expect more eye-popping, even hair-raising, developments in the next few weeks.

Before the administration's impossible contortions monopolize our attention, however, let us revisit the senatorial lineup of the so-called united opposition again. It is worth a second look, because its contradictions are serious enough to put its very existence as a political alliance into question.

In movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. and Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda, the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino have two survey-topping candidates. But their popularity cannot disguise the fundamental inconsistency that wracks the opposition coalition.

A large part of the coalition, consisting mainly of those who support deposed President Joseph Estrada, wants the May 10 elections to be nothing less than a vindication of Estrada. Call this the redemption objective.

Officials closest to Estrada, and Estrada himself, have called for a Poe presidency for transparent reasons. Firm believers in the "weather-weather" theory of politics, they see a Poe administration as heralding a change in the ousted leader's political and legal fortunes.

A Poe presidency may not necessarily be the second coming of the short-lived Estrada administration, as some of the most fervent Estrada loyalists desire, but it will at the very least signal a radical change in the political weather.

Those who believe judicial decisions follow election returns hope that a Poe victory will result in a favorable decision; those who don't think the country's courts can be influenced hope that a Poe victory will lead to a presidential pardon.

It seems beyond doubt, however, that a contrary impulse helped moved Poe and Legarda to run together; they want to bring an end to the political divisiveness that has marked the last three years. Call it the reconciliation objective.

Sen. Vicente Sotto III, himself a controversial symbol of partisan politics, has called the Poe-Legarda ticket "a healing partnership." Legarda, who was one of the 10 senators who voted to open the second Jose Velarde envelope during Estrada's impeachment trial, thus paving the way to his ouster, justified her decision to partner with Estrada's close friend in terms of unity and healing. We can expect Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and ex-senator Ernesto Herrera, two KNP candidates identified as pro-impeachment, to hew closely to this line. (It is a line, we must note, that ex-defense secretary Orlando Mercado used when he joined the administration's Senate slate.) The time has come to leave the Estrada political crisis behind.

But the reconciliation and redemption objectives are not merely different; they are contradictory.

Another serious inconsistency that weakens the Poe-led ticket is the tug of war between alternative and traditional politics that has marked Poe's own appearances—or disappearing acts—in the last month and a half.

The actor has been praised for not appearing side by side with traditional, even discredited politicians. In none of his major political appearances did he surround himself with either the trappings of politics or with political operatives: not when he declared he was running, not when he accepted the draft of the KNP.

But the reality is, politicians are working actively behind the scenes. In fact, the decision to leave politicians out of his (rare) appearances was based on a recommendation by politicians themselves. Having made a virtue out of necessity, the handlers of the very private candidate have seen the tactic work, and now want more of it.

This is not to say that all opposition politicians, especially those running for office, accept the restriction, or even understand it. Many have realized they have to hang on to Poe's coattails to make it; but they have also realized, if belatedly, that for them to win there must be somebody inside the coat.

So many kibitzers second-guessing FPJ

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IT is said that if you put two women on a desert island and they would have to depend on each other for survival, both of them would die. They wouldn't be able to get along even if their lives depended on it. And that is what is happening right now in the coalition senatorial ticket. The women candidates can't get along with one another. There are only four of them in the 12-man ticket, but apparently it is not big enough for them.

Former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago withdrew from the ticket because she said she could not stand the "crying lady," vice-presidential candidate Loren Legarda. Rep Imee Marcos also wants out because she said she was confused. "*Naguguluhan ako*," she said. What is confusing her she did not say, but it could be she is getting pressure from her family because she asked for permission to withdraw right after a family council in which their mother Imelda Marcos participated.

It seems the family wants Imee to be in the administration ticket. But Imee had been endorsing "Da King" long before he took the idea of a presidential candidacy seriously and she wanted to run for senator on his ticket. In fact, Imee once toyed with the idea of producing a comedy with FPJ and herself as the stars titled "Da King and I-mee."

Why would the Marcos family want her to run in the administration ticket instead of with the powerhouse opposition ticket? It could only be, said a political analyst, because the family was offered a modus vivendi with the administration regarding their ill-gotten wealth.

It is understandable why the administration would want Imee in its ticket. It is courting not only the Marcos loyalist votes but also the votes of the Solid North. Plus, it is having a hard time completing its senatorial slate.

Obviously, Imee does not relish running with the administration candidates, so she would rather run for a third term in her congressional district in Ilocos Norte.

As for Santiago, she wanted to be "Da King's" running mate but since he spurned her in favor of Legarda, the wrath of a woman scorned was heaped on the other woman who displaced her.

* * *

Poor FPJ, this early he is already experiencing the headaches of a president. So many kibitzers in his camp, who are supposed to help him, are second-guessing his decisions. He it was who courted Legarda to be his running mate; Legarda did not apply for the job. In fact, up to the last minute, Legarda was torn between running for vice president or running for reelection to the Senate. She reasoned out that it would be much easier to win a Senate slot.

Besides, there is an element of patriotism in Legarda's decision to contest the vice-presidency. If FPJ's running mate is anybody else but her, she said, Noli de Castro would win hands down. "*Kawawa naman ang ating bansa*," she said.

Indeed, Legarda is the perfect leading lady for FPJ; she is the only candidate who can foil the popularity of De Castro. And FPJ showed his decision-making prowess in choosing her.

And because he is the standard-bearer who bears the burden of pulling the whole ticket to victory, FPJ should be given leeway in choosing the members of his slate. But why are so many Estrada *sipsip*, who are clinging to FPJ's coattails to get back in power, trying to undermine his decisions and wreck the newly formed coalition? They must remember that without FPJ, they would still be on the outside looking in after the May elections. And most likely, the Macapagal administration would continue to persecute them—and that includes Sen. Ping Lacson. Their only hope of deliverance is FPJ.

So stop making things hard for your "messiah." *Malayo pa ang* election, but the Erap *sipsip* are already behaving like they were already back in Malacañang, dictating policies. Erap himself has no complaints; he has no objection to Legarda as the coalition's vice-presidential candidate, so why are the *sipsip* complaining?

Remember that FPJ is a reluctant candidate. Like Legarda, he did not ask for the job. He agreed to run only because of the clamor from the people. If he gets irritated by all the nitpicking, he may just junk everything and go back to moviemaking where nobody tells him how to do his job. Then where would the *sipsip* be? Without FPJ they would be nothing.

* * *

It is not only the Erap *sipsip* but also some of "Da King's" own *kamaganak* who are making life hard for him. The campaign has not even started yet but an alleged niece who keeps dropping his name by referring to FPJ as "Tito Ronnie," is already behaving like she is the executive secretary in Malacañang. This woman, trying to impress a group of visiting UP professors of her importance, told them that she "is so busy preparing the list of Cabinet members in the new administration," and more of that sort of foolishness. She is becoming a pain in the neck of FPJ's inner circle.

If FPJ does not banish her to the United States or to Timbuktu, he may not even get to the gates of Malacañang.

* * *

There is an error in the certificates of candidacy printed by the Commission on Elections. In the blank for residency of the candidate, there is none for local candidates. The residency requirements for national and local candidates are different: 10 years for presidential candidates, three years for senatorial candidates and one year in their districts for congressional candidates. No such blanks in the Comelec forms.

Without them, candidates can be sued for disqualification. And how will the Comelec determine if they are qualified or not?

A list of the things this country may look forward to over the next six years, from 2004 to 2010, under the administration of President Fernando Poe Jr. and Vice President Noli de Castro:

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

To be continued

Pinay nurses preferred

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

COMING home, I note that the various political groups, including the administration party, are having problems filling up their respective senatorial slates. It seems that at the moment all that the opposition and administration groups can fill up are six slots each, while Raul Roco's independent group is having even bigger problems. Sen. Panfilo Lacson, on the other hand, not only has a tough time getting his complete senatorial slate, but also a running mate.

Prospective senatorial candidates are afraid to run because of the huge expenses involved and the diminishing prospect of winning, given the myriad candidates. Surveys indicate that voters, especially in the provinces, can only fill up about six names on the ballot. But this problem of how to complete the senatorial slate of the political groups only drives home the need to return to the two-party system—less expensive and far more sensible.

* * *

As I had predicted weeks ago, the indication is that among the senatorial candidates to be fielded by Lakas is independent reelectionist Sen. John Osmeña, who had been identified with the opposition over the past few years. With the support of the Garcias and the overwhelming number of Osmeñas on GMA's side, except for former Gov. Lito Osmeña, now with Roco, and Sen. Serge Osmeña, who remains independent, the administration is assured of seizing a substantial number of the huge Cebuano vote.

* * *

Over the past few years the need of US hospitals for nurses has become quite acute, but since fewer Americans want to serve in this very difficult profession, US authorities were forced to source the supply of nurses from foreign shores. And among the various nationalities serving American hospitals, Filipino nurses are the favorite because of their tender loving care, their facility with the language, their generally pleasant and well-scrubbed appearance, and their cheerful and uncomplaining nature (as against that of American nurses). US hospitals also prefer foreign nurses as they are able to save on salaries—in a 40-hour week of duty the foreign nurses are paid a beginning salary of about $26 an hour, versus the $35 to $40 an hour for US nurses. $25 an hour is a lot of money for Pinoy nurses who earn much less back home, but the bigger come-on is the green card that is extended to them and their families.

* * *

I spoke by phone with my niece-in-law, Riza Dayao Olivares, wife of my nephew Ramon Luis Baretto Olivares, about the situation of Pinay nurses in the United States. Riza, who hails from Kidapawan and is a nursing graduate of the Philippine Women's University School of Nursing, arrived in the United States a few months ago with a contract to work at the Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. She began as a nurse in the intensive care unit, but is due to be rotated to the ICU's neuro section. Her Wharton-trained husband and 2-year-old daughter followed last November and they now rent an apartment in the university grounds. Riza noted that Pinoy nurses abound in the US capital, especially in the Washington Hospital Center, which is like our PGH, "*bagsakan ng lahat ng mga kaso.*"

* * *

But apparently there are two kinds of foreign nurses in the United States. One kind has a work contract with a specific hospital, while the other kind has no specific contract and is recruited by hospitals from placement agencies on a need basis; these casuals are referred to in the nurses' circle as the "travelers" because they move from one place of work to another. Those with a contract are paid about $26 per hour, while the "travelers" are paid from $48 to $50 per hour. The casuals enjoy bigger salaries, but they do not have the security of tenure or guaranteed work hours of the contractual nurses, so that they may end up six months in DC and six months in California or elsewhere, or they may have no work at all. Moreover, the "travelers" have to pay taxes and insurance, as they don't have the insurance and disability benefits contractual nurses enjoy. In addition, explained Riza, in her case, if she wants to do further studies, about 80 percent of the costs will be footed by the university, which is not the case for the "travelers."

* * *

Nursing among Fil-Americans is a big thing. We had a good reunion in Milpitas, Sta. Clara county, about an hour's drive from San Francisco, with Ignacio P. Molina Jr., my husband's former officer in the defense department's intelligence office. Molina, who hails from Leyte and migrated to California just after the Edsa Revolution, now works as watch commander in the public safety department of the Jesuit-run Sta. Clara University. Interestingly, his 44-year-old wife, the former Lillian White, and 18-year-old daughter Ilyn are currently enrolled at the community college near their home, preparing to be licensed vocational nurses, while a niece, Maribel Aquiatan, plans to also study to be a registered nurse. I asked Lillian why take up nursing now in her "ripe old age," and she replied that it's a course that's badly needed and offers a lot of security.

* * *

Lillian's story is quite interesting. She is a granddaughter of Thomas Everett White, who must have been either a member of the American expeditionary forces in Samar in the early 1900s, or a Thomasite. White was one of three Americans who eventually chose to settle down in Taft, Eastern Samar; one of the three, Samuel Craig, eventually became Taft's mayor. White married a native girl named Dominga Cangco and sired a dozen children, including Lillian's father, Edward. Many decades years later, the huge White clan decided to seek US citizenship; apart from their *mestiza* looks, the descendants presented to the US Embassy in Manila, as proof of their ancestry, a carefully-preserved box of Thomas' yellowed letters to an uncle in the United States. They promptly got their citizenship.

Loren and FPJ

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

THERE ARE two incidents in recent memory that I distinctly recall of Loren Legarda.

The first took place in 2000 when the National Historical Institute decided to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Makahambus Hill in northern Mindanao. That was a battle that took place on June 4, 1900 between Filipino revolutionaries who had fought under the banner of Emilio Aguinaldo against the Americans. The Filipinos won that battle when the American side exacted heavy casualties and failed to take over the fort which was perched atop a precipitous hill known as Makahambus.

To revere the memory of that battle, the NHI board decided to honor the battle site with a national historical marker. That distinction was conferred in a solemn protocol-laden ceremony replete with military honors and a gun salute. A national official graced the event and addressed the descendants of local heroes.

At that time, Legarda was a popular senator and so was invited to be the special guest of honor in the historic commemoration. Her office promptly relayed her positive response to the invitation. And so the invitations were printed. Hardly had these been sent out, however, when someone in her office staff called to say that the senator had changed her mind and was now declining the invitation. The reason given was simply a change in the senator's schedule.

But there appeared to be something else behind her sudden turnabout. At that time, the abduction of foreign tourists in the Sipadan island of Malaysia by the Abu Sayyaf had just taken place. Legarda's change of heart appeared to be due more to a fear of treading on "dangerous" Mindanao territory than anything else.

It is standard procedure for event organizers to have a plan B. But a keynote speaker who backs out at the last minute puts event organizers in a real tizzy trying to salvage disrupted plans. Legarda's chickening out was only offset by an alternative who not only turned out to be better but a more appropriate person for the event. This was Jimmy Policarpio who not only was a Cabinet secretary at that time but whose wife Sheila was a great-granddaughter of Apolinar Velez, who led the Makahambus revolutionary forces.

The second incident I recall of Legarda came after the Huluga heritage site was destroyed by Cagayan de Oro Mayor Vicente Emano. Probably noting the national media attention the destruction of the site had attracted, Legarda's staff wrote me by e-mail to say the senator was calling for a Senate inquiry into the matter. To which the mayor of Cagayan de Oro, with his usual braggadocio, retorted that he would never subject himself to a Senate inquiry. But Legarda's staff had disseminated her resolution to the media and this was promptly reported by national dailies.

Nothing however came out of that Legarda initiative. When weeks later the senator tried to craft a bill that would protect heritage sites, Mindanao sites were not even mentioned in the bill. She had not done her homework. The talked-about Huluga heritage site destruction Senate inquiry was just a dud.

The first incident seemed to have been motivated by opportunism and self-preservation. The second was just all show which we have seen is typical of Legarda. All these are trademarks of the wheeling-dealing tribe of traditional politicians.

Now that she has completely obliterated the sublime symbol of her tears during the Estrada impeachment trial, Legarda has moved full circle by moving over to the camp of Erap. This sends us only one message, that Legarda will do what it takes to feed her ambition. In that sense, she is no different from GMA who is now about to be relegated to political oblivion.

In these politically contentious times, pro-FPJ pundits tout him as a non-*trapo* and therefore the answer to the ancient hold by one *trapo* after another on the presidency. Look again. Look at all the *trapos* FPJ has allowed himself to be surrounded with, Legarda included, and the certainty stares us starkly in the face that he too, will go the way of the *trapo* sooner than later.

Those critical of FPJ often cite his weak educational background. But look where a brilliant Marcos brought us. Others scoff at his zero experience in political governance. But what experience are they talking about when those who had, Erap included, were grounded on nothing but wheeling-dealing and self-preserving political traditions?

Behn Cervantes was right. An FPJ presidency can only bring us to an irreversible trend of choosing candidates who hardly know an iota of what national governance means even as they enjoy widespread popularity. In 2010, it will be Dagul for president.

Pundits miss out on one thing: ideology. Does FPJ have one? His choice of Loren Legarda has just provided us the answer.

* * *

Comments to monta@sni.ph

Can Loren Legarda beat Noli de Castro?

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

"SIX years is too short for a good President and too long for a bad one," Quezon's famous dictum goes, thus giving us the four-year, two-term system of yesteryear. But the 1987 Constitution ignores his warning by establishing the present six-year, one-term presidency. Sometimes I think six years might be too long even for a good President, but we're stuck with it.

The 1987 Constitution also decouples the election of the president from that of the vice president. Since 1987, they no longer win as a team together, but run in completely independent races against the other candidates for the No. 1 and No. 2 jobs in the government. In America, by way of contrast, it is the ticket that wins or loses, and the vice-presidential running mate even wins his or her own presidency—that of the US Senate, and is not just a spare tire.

With our six-year term the spare tire becomes all-important, in case of a flat or accident. We elect both popularly and directly but the choice of vice president is crucial, because that is the spare part we hold in reserve in case the president goes bad for some reason during his long term at the helm. Since there is no run-off election even if six or seven candidates run, the vice-presidency is an insurance policy against the possibility that the people make a wrong choice and Vox Dei misspeaks or is misheard as a rule of the minority. (If only justices and senators wouldn't panic at the due processes of the law, impeachment could be no more catastrophic than a vote of no-confidence in a parliamentary system, making constitutional change unnecessary.)

So how should responsible citizens make their choice for vice president? Here is my suggestion. The vice president should be the best choice among the candidates that we would want to become president, if we do not know who the elected president will be and how he or she will perform.

Miriam Defensor-Santiago is unhappy because Erap promised her the vice-presidential slot under FPJ. But it is FPJ who is running, not Erap, so Santiago's learned enunciations in Ilonggo-American accents won't joust with *"Magandang gabi, bayan!"* in campaign sorties. Yet Santiago is right about something when she grumbles about principles. She is Edsa Tres, just like FPJ, while Loren Legarda is Edsa Dos. But KNP does not stand for "Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Oposisyon," so FPJ's running mate being from Edsa Dos makes the unity theme credible, even if it splits the opposition. An ideological hardliner like Santiago would make it unbelievable.

Legarda need not lose her soul in order to heal that split. She is running not as FPJ's soul mate, but as his running mate, for Edsa Dos, to unify the nation. She is the people's insurance policy, a hedge bet in case FPJ goes bad and turns out to be Erap in disguise. She should not try to out-Noli Noli or pretend to now be part of the Edsa Tres tribes. Cry babies and hardliners will settle down when they are reminded of Knute Rockne's "Winning isn't everything—it's the only thing."

FPJ's choice of Legarda is just the right choice in the opening salvo of this chess match. I hope making his second big decision makes decision-making grow on FPJ. I think Legarda will be an acceptable choice to Edsa Dos forces as an insurance policy in case FPJ turns out to be a dud. She is, as Santiago insists, an Edsa Dos principal. Well, FPJ is an Edsa Tres principal, make no mistake about it, yet he has reached out to Edsa Dos by choosing Legarda. The message in the FPJ-Loren Legarda ticket is that if FPJ starts having midnight drinking sessions with unsavory stock market manipulators and *jueteng* lords, the spare tire at least, is not Ernesto Maceda or Jinggoy Estrada. Or even Noli de Castro.

But can Legarda beat the poll-topping De Castro? You bet! Just look at the material you've got to work with. While it is true that De Castro has a big lead over her in the scientific polls, I think that his numbers are soft. Also, Legarda has the youth vote in a big way. She could electrify the entire election by awakening that sector to their overwhelming numbers and precipitate a long-awaited generation change in our political leadership.

What about platform of government? What can turn the Philippines from a failure into a success? Here is re-electionist George W. Bush in a historic foreign policy speech recently: "Successful societies limit the power of the state and the power of the military—so that governments respond to the will of the people, and not the will of an elite. Successful societies protect freedom with the consistent and impartial rule of law, instead of selectively applying the law to punish political opponents. Successful societies allow room for healthy civic institutions—for political parties and labor unions and independent newspapers and broadcast media. Successful societies guarantee religious liberty—the right to serve and honor God without fear of persecution. Successful societies privatize their economies, and secure the rights of property. They prohibit and punish official corruption, and invest in the health and education of their people. They recognize the rights of women. And instead of directing hatred and resentment against others, successful societies appeal to the hopes of their own people."

I think the hope of Filipinos in the broad center is for Edsa Dos and Edsa Tres to add the best and subtract the worst from each other and find common ground to build this nation along such lines. Whoever nurtures that hope the best should win. *(Visit my personal website http://deanjorgebocobo.blogspot.com)*

Deliberate shading of the victim's face

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

IF a kidnap victim was rescued unscathed by the authorities a month ago, the feat would have made the front page of most newspapers. Not anymore. Between now and May 10, the print media are fixated on the coming elections, especially the race for president and vice president.

Last Dec. 30, the 2-year-old son of a Chinese-Filipino businessman who was kidnapped on Dec. 2 in Muntinlupa City was rescued by a composite team of policemen and soldiers. The story about the successful recovery of the child was reported by most newspapers, including the INQUIRER, and TV news programs.

But the story did not land on the front pages; it was relegated to the inside pages. The filing of the certificates of candidacy for president by former education secretary Raul Roco and Bro. Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus is Lord Movement hogged the headlines.

In the INQUIRER's case, the report was featured in the Metro section, which is on the last page of the main section. Accompanying the news was a photo of the child, courtesy of the Malacañang Press Office, kissing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The eyes of the boy were blacked out by heavy ink. The cutlines read: The rescued boy lands a kiss on the cheek of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a gesture of thanks during a media presentation in Malacañang.

The story did not give the name of the kidnap victim and his parents. It merely described him as "the son of a glass and aluminum factory owner." Only the names of the arrested suspect and top police officials who were involved in the rescue were mentioned.

Deliberate act

The concealment of the victim's face was done on purpose by the newspaper. So was the omission of his name and the names of his parents. The action was explained in a side note in the report that read "although the government named the boy and his parents and even presented them to media, the INQUIRER does not identify kidnap victims who are minors."

I'm sure that statement raised a lot of eyebrows among the readers. For a newspaper that is known for reporting the events as they happen regardless of who gets hurt in the process, the "blackout" seemed to be out of character.

After all, the excluded information and photo had been earlier aired by the major TV networks. The other broadsheets and tabloids have reported the news complete in all respects. In the follow-up story on the kidnap rescue that came out on Jan. 1, this time about the way the victim was mistreated by his kidnappers as related by the neighbors of the house where he was kept, the names of the victim and his parents continued to remain under wraps.

So what's the point of concealing something that many of the readers already know? Was the INQUIRER trying to prove something by that rather unusual action?

I was not surprised by the decision of the editorial staff on the matter. The issue was thoroughly discussed by the editors a couple of times in the weekly editorial assessment meetings. They agreed that news and photos about minor children who are involved in or the subject of criminal acts shall be handled with extra care.

The interests of the child, not those of his parents, guardians or handlers, shall be used as the yardstick in determining whether or not his name should be revealed or his photo published.

Editorial policy

The bottom line question in situations of this nature is, will the ends of justice or interests of the child be served if all information about him is disclosed to the readers? If the answer is in the negative, then a blackout of sorts is made about his personal details.

Or to put it in another way, it is bad enough that the child suffered a traumatic experience, what's the point in aggravating it by making a public spectacle out of it? Years from now, when the victim accidentally reads about his ordeal in full gory splendor, the wounds already healed by time may be unnecessarily opened.

The policy holds even if a parent or guardian expressly gives his consent to the disclosure of the child's identity or publication of his photo. The child's welfare is taken from his point of view, not from that of the mother or father or whoever claims to be his close relative. And regardless of how other media facilities handle the same story.

Thus, early last year, the INQUIRER refused the publication of the picture of the child that a high-ranking priest assigned in a Metro Manila diocese reportedly sired with a young girl and whom he refused to support. According to the mother, the photo is meant to highlight the resemblance of the child to her father-priest. After the INQUIRER came out with the story but minus the photo in question, the same photo came out the following day in two other newspapers.

Covered

There are times though when reference has to be made in the news about the identity of the minor or it is difficult to avoid showing his face, like in the Dec. 31 photo of the rescued child kissing the President.

If naming the minor is necessary to complete the story, a pseudonym is used in lieu of his real name. So a name is given to the child by the reporter followed by the words "not his true name" in parenthesis.

There is an interesting sidelight to this practice. In case several newspapers decide to hide the child's identity in this manner, there is no uniformity in his identification. One newspaper may use, for example, the name "Clarence"; another may call him "Pedro." The unnamed child gets to be identified by whatever name the newspaper reporter or editor may take a fancy to at the time of the writing of the report.

With regard to photos, if cutting out the child's image would ruin the photo, the technique used to keep his identity confidential is to blacken or "pixelize" his face. The method may not totally conceal his likeness but with the eyes blacked out, the readers (in particular, those who may have evil designs on the child) do not get an accurate picture of his looks.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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Big business' stake in 2004 polls

THE GOVERNMENT'S chief economist, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, acknowledged that the big business practice of financing our politicians' elections is why our government policies are formulated to satisfy big business demands. The preferential "quid pro quo" of course translates to unnecessary imports and a ballooning foreign debt, which in turn causes our country's rising poverty figures.

The fact is that we have been courting foreign investments at terms detrimental to us—an attitude of servility which we got from the American colonial rule. That our leaders still believe that leadership must be assertive—even dictatorial—in order to be effective is a residue of the American influence. But it is a false belief given that the manner only leads to an abuse of authority which eventually takes its toll on Filipinos.

What does it mean if not that we must change our attitude? If we will solve our problems, we must admit our mistake. Why kowtow to foreign interests at the country's expense? And why insist on changing the form of government when it is obvious that no system of rule fails by itself, only by the disrespect which ensues when responsibilities are ignored?

Why we have not instituted moral reforms since Marcos was exiled is obvious: we still see Imelda Marcos, Danding Cojuangco, Lucio Tan and the other oligarchs with powerful Western connections, strutting about and displaying unruffled feathers in a way that cannot but encourage more graft and corruption.

People selling their votes during elections aren't really the problem when we realize that the poor would not resort to it if government took care of their economic needs in the first place.

—ERNESTO K. MAGTOTO,
ernestomagtoto@yahoo.com

Platform for FPJ to mull over

YOUR editorial cartoon, "Presidency 101," (PDI, 12/29/03) unwittingly pays too much credit to my humble effort to get Fernando Poe Jr. to espouse a coherent and credible platform for purposes of the 2004 presidential elections.

In fact, all I had was a couple of hours of dialogue with FPJ where I offered Freedom (Federalism, Reforms, Education, Economics, Debt, Overseas Filipinos and Mindanao) for his consideration as a seminal platform of his presidential bid.

In fairness to him, he readily saw the vigor and vitality of Freedom as a campaign platform of government but for federalism. Federalism, he suggested, should be included as a proposal to amend the Constitution so that the people would discuss it more fully and understand its import to their lives.

That then, was just about the extent of my participation in the crafting—as suggested by the editorial cartoon—of the syllabus for the Presidency 101 crash course.

And if it may help disabuse the bias against FPJ in the minds of some of your readers, let me say that in that brief period when we had that honest-to-goodness conversation on matters of State, FPJ showed a willingness to listen and displayed a good grasp of the vital which the fox in "The Little Prince" captures with these haunting words: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential 'is invisible to the eye'."

In closing, let me say that your editorial cartoon also says it all: there's much cerebration that needs to be done by any would-be president, not only for FPJ, before any celebration may be rightly claimed by the leader of the nation that is wracked by so many problems, it is a wonder we still survive as a republic.

—SEN. AQUILINO
Q. PIMENTEL JR.,
6/F Senate of the Philippines,
GSIS Bldg., Roxas Boulevard,
Pasay City

Abu Sayyaf no spent force

THERE is no conclusive evidence to warrant the judgment that the Abu Sayyaf is already a spent force. The capture of Ghalib Andang, alias Commander Robot, is just that: the capture of one of its leaders. It bespeaks no total annihilation of the terrorist group that sowed the seeds of terrorism in Mindanao, if not in the entire Philippines.

Unless and until all the Abu Sayyaf leaders and members are subdued or decimated, the Abu Sayyaf will remain a force to reckon with, not just by our government and people but also by the international community, particularly the International Coalition Against Terror, which is hell-bent on bringing them to justice for their terroristic activities and collusion with the Jemaah Islamiyah and the al-Qaida.

While we congratulate the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police for a job well done in the capture of Andang, we challenge them to apply the full force of the law on the other Abu Sayyaf leaders and members, particularly Khadafy Janjalani and Radulan Sahiron.

And while we commend the government's unrelenting efforts in wiping out the Abu Sayyaf, we enjoin the administration to successfully uproot one of the very causes of terrorism—poverty. That way, we do not only stamp out the Abu Sayyaf from the face of the earth, we make the Philippines no fertile ground for terrorism and criminality.

—DODO RA. CAGAS,
Estrada 3rd Street,
Digos City,
Davao del Sur

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LETTERS

Why is the Palace silent on 'jueteng'?

THE PHILIPPINES is famous for its hospitable people, rich culture, fantastic sights. With much shame, however, the country is also known as the emerging gambling capital of Asia, and here with *jueteng* as its national flag for gambling.

Jueteng is vincible. *Jueteng* lords are liable. *Jueteng* payola means corruption.

When PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane merely said that the country should be freed from *jueteng*, lo and behold, *jueteng* went, and in many places is actually gone. This only goes to prove that *jueteng* is the easiest illegal activity that can be done away with. The mere words of the police general were enough.

If our police authorities and local officials cannot do away with *jueteng*, then the conclusion is obvious: there is nothing illegal, or criminal, that they are capable of ridding the country of.

The *jueteng* lords are well known and well identified, and even revered in their places of operation. How come they can still freely come and go? They are liable for being heads of illegal activities and yet they are the national "untouchables." They are beyond the reach of any law, or any of our public authorities—the national leadership included.

Corruption is a sickness in public service. It has been repeatedly said that the present government is against corruption of any kind, anywhere. It knows only too well that *jueteng* payola corrupts; it started the downfall of the past government. Yet, not once has the national leadership spoken or acted against *jueteng*.

The national crusade for a *jueteng*-free Philippines has been quite vocal and active in its campaign against the illegal numbers game. But what it gets from the national leadership is a big silence on *jueteng*. Why?

—O.V. CRUZ, DD, chair,
Jueteng-Free Philippines, Manila

Murder by society?

IS the death penalty a "murder by society"? There is no definite teaching about capital punishment in the Bible. The Old Testament taught "an eye for an eye" but in the New Testament, Jesus preached, "turn the other cheek."

For many centuries, Christian teaching has accepted in principle that the State (the legitimate public authority) has the right to take the life of a person guilty of very serious (capital) crimes. But this did not mean that the State had to use this right. But the question is not so much about the right of the State to impose capital punishment but whether capital punishment is morally justifiable in the concrete circumstances of modern society.

Today, the United States is one of the few major nations of the world that allows capital punishment. The US Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976 and from that time until late 1990, 142 persons have been executed.

The death penalty is probably good for murderers as it will save them from hell and eternal damnation. A condemned man would examine his conscience before he passes on to his reward and in nearly every case not before. Once he admits that wrong was done by taking the life of another human being and asks for forgiveness, his soul is not lost but is admitted into paradise. So the death penalty need not be viewed as a cruel or unusual punishment but as a favor.

Some reasons being echoed against the imposition of the death penalty are: (a) the possibility of a mistake, (b) the generation of unhealthy publicity, (c) unfair discrimination against the poor, and (d) the long delays and appeals that diminish the effect on other criminals and cause deep anxiety to the condemned and his or her family.

—PETE N. BELTRAN,
11 Bulletin St., Quezon City

Changing spots, same leopard

WHAT is ex-senator Juan Ponce Enrile's real agenda? Is this the same Enrile we know from 30 years ago during the martial law era? Why does he seem intent on grabbing the chairmanship of the Energy Regulatory Commission for no other plausible reason than gaining media mileage? Watching Enrile, the question comes to mind: can a leopard change its spots?

The last time I remember that Enrile had something to do with setting the Meralco rates was in 1973, after the martial law government grabbed Meralco for itself and its cronies. The iron-handed government thought nothing of immediately imposing a more than 100 percent rate hike at the time, citing the fuel price increase and the continuing devaluation of the peso; the same circumstances that still haunt us today.

Are we seeing and listening to the same Enrile? Why did he willingly consent then and why is he violently railing now against a measly 2 percent increase? Our utilities, like any other business, need to adjust their prices from time to time in order to keep up with the increasing cost of providing good service.

Enrile's behavior is one for the history books. Even if a leopard can change its spots, it is still the same leopard. It is convincing proof of the adage: the more things change, the more they remain the same.

—EDCEL CASTRO,
Mayon Street,
Sta. Mesa Heights, QC

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(10 DVD & 2 CD per winner)
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2. Fill up the raffle stub and affix your signature then drop it off at drop boxes designated in every articipating dealers /outlets.
3. Promo period is from November 15,2003-January 16, 2004. Deadline for submission of entries is on January 16,2004, 6:00pm
4. Raffle Draw will be held on January 30,2004 , Friday at 2:00pm at Sony Philippines Head Office, 26F
Tower 1 The Enterprise Center , 6766 Ayala Avenue cor. Paseo de Roxas , Makati City: The raffle will be done in the presence of a DTI representative.
5. Prizes are not convertible to cash.
6. The 20% Tax for prizes exceeding P10,000 will be shouldered by Sony Philippines .
7. A winner can only win once. If a customer's name is drawn more than once, the prize of the bigger value will be awarded.
8. Prizes can be claimed within 60 days from notification after which , prize will be forfeited with prior approval of DTI.
9. Winners will be notified via telephone and registered mail and published in a newspaper of general circulation. Prizes may be claimed upon presentation of a valid ID with picture and with the mail stating their winning prize at the Sony Philippines Head Office, 26F Tower 1 The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Avenue cor. Paseo de Roxas ,Makati City or through other Sony companies specified in the registered mail.
10. There will be a total of 20 winners for this raffle promo wherein 5 Raffle entries per Sony Company will be drawn to win 1 Sony prize each.
11. All employees of Sony Philippines , Sony Ericsson, Sonic Music , Columbia (Sony) Pictures, Magnavision dealers/outlets and their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from this promotion.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit # 3339 Series of 2003.

MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2004
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
A15

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Bunye: GMA open to extended truce

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is studying whether to extend the Christmas truce with communist rebels which ends tomorrow, according to presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

"The President will await the assessment and recommendation of Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita who had recommended the implementation of the Somo [suspension of military operations] last month before deciding on whether to extend the ceasefire," Bunye said in an interview with RMN radio.

The President declared a Somo against the New People's Army (NPA) from Dec. 10, 2003 until midnight of Jan. 6.

The President was hopeful that the Somo would pave the way for the start of "meaningful peace negotiations" with the National Democratic Front in parallel with the peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Bunye said.

But Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) spokesperson Gregorio 'Ka Roger' Rosal told the INQUIRER that government forces should brace themselves for the resumption of intensified attacks from the NPA after its unilateral ceasefire ended yesterday midnight. The NPA observed a 15-day ceasefire from Dec. 20 up to midnight yesterday.

"Now that the 15-day respite from battles is over, all the Red-fighters in all 130 guerrilla fronts nationwide are raring to launch more intense attacks against enemy forces," Rosal said in a phone interview."

The renewed tactical offensives are in response to the recent call made by Armando Liwanag, central committee chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Rosal said.

In his 35th founding anniversary message last Dec. 26, Liwanag urged the NPA "to intensify the people's war and launch tactical offensives as frequently as we can win them."

But Army spokesman Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said military operations against the NPA will resume once its unilateral ceasefire expires tomorrow.

Rosal said that with time running short to finally broker a peace agreement with the Macapagal administration, "It's business as usual for the NPA and the entire revolutionary movement."

He added: "Now that these politicians will become very busy with the political circus, there's no more quality time left for them for a serious discussion of all the agenda related to the peace talks."

Rosal also scoffed at the government plan to curb the rebels' collection of permit-to-campaign fees from election candidates. "There is no way for them to stop us from collecting PTC," he said.

The rebel leader once described the collection of PTC as an "election fact of life in the country since the NPA came into prominence." *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau and Gil Cabacungan Jr.*

Comelec proclaims new Nueva Ecija town mayor

SAN ISIDRO, Nueva Ecija—The Commission on Elections proclaimed a new mayor in this town on Saturday, four months before the next elections.

Nestor Magno, a candidate who was disqualified while the Comelec was canvassing the 2001 election returns in this town, was proclaimed the duly elected mayor after the canvass showed that he won by more than 3,000 votes over incumbent Mayor Sonia Lorenzo.

The Supreme Court, in an *en banc* resolution on Dec. 11, paved the way for the canvassing of election returns for Magno, this town's mayor from 1992 to 1998.

The newly constituted board of canvassers said Magno got 9,230 votes while Lorenzo received 6,219 votes from 105 precincts in the town.

A beaming Magno, 54, arrived at the municipal hall here on Saturday noon amid cheers from his supporters. He went to the session hall where the canvassing was held and smiled when Alicia Solitario, election supervisor and chair of the board of canvassers, raised his hand to signal his victory after more than two years of legal battle.

"I am definitely happy. This is a vindication of the overwhelming support of the electorate of this town who voted for me. I knew and they knew that I won in that elections," Magno, a member of the administration party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, told the INQUIRER.

He said he would file his certificate of candidacy for reelection today, his first day in office.

Reconciliation

Magno also said he is willing to reconcile with his political rivals.

Lorenzo was not in the town hall during the three-hour canvassing of election returns.

Former Rep. Victorino Lorenzo, the mayor's husband, said his wife will run for San Isidro mayor on May 10.

Mayor Lorenzo is an ally of Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III, head of the Bagong Lakas ng Nueva Ecija (Balane) party.

When Magno was disqualified to run for mayor during the 1998 elections, he recommended Lorenzo as his replacement.

Magno's disqualification was a result of a petition by a San Isidro resident, who claimed that Magno had not completed the probation period of five years for a bribery conviction when he ran for mayor in 2001.

Magno was convicted of soliciting money from a jueteng operator while San Isidro mayor in 1995. He remained in his post until 1998 and served under probation.

The petition cited provisions of the Omnibus Election Code that showed Magno qualified only for the 2004 elections.

The high court, however, ruled that the Omnibus Election Code must yield to the Local Government Code, which has a different provision on candidates' qualifications.

Magno petitioned the Comelec citing the Supreme Court ruling. The Comelec ordered the creation of a new board to canvass Magno's votes. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Jumbo jet flies more travelers to Davao City

DAVAO CITY—The country's flag carrier has started to use a bigger aircraft to boost its capability to service the Davao-Manila route.

For the first time on Saturday, the Philippine Airlines (PAL) used a 747-400 to service the domestic route.

PAL has only previously fielded the 747-400 for its international flights. It flies Airbus 330 for its Davao-Manila route and other domestic routes.

Davao PAL branch manager Arthur Balaga said the airline decided to use the 425-seater aircraft, also known as the jumbo jet, following the increasing number of air travelers here.

"Since Dec. 21, there have been 12 extra flights a day and these are still fully-booked until now," Balaga said.

Dennis Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Starting with 301 to 320 kWh

Refund Phase III begins January 2004

Refund Phase III covers Meralco residential and general services customers who consumed 301 KWh and above in their April 2003 bills.

The first group to receive their refund this January 2004 will be those who consumed 301 kWh to 320 kWh. Watch for your January 2004 bill for refund details: when, where and how much you will receive.

Those who consumed 321 kWh and above will be refunded in the succeeding months. Please check your next bills for further announcements on your refund schedule.

The refund is an ongoing program directed by the Energy Regulatory Commission and the Supreme Court beginning June 2003. It covers electric bills from February 1994 to May 2003.

How do I get my refund?
You have two (2) options:

- Go to your designated refund center on the dates stated in your bill and receive the net refund amount in cash for amounts less than P4,000 or in check for amounts of P4,000 and above
- Have your net refund amount automatically applied to your future electric bills by choosing not to go to your designated refund center on the dates stated in your electric bill.

FOR THOSE CLAIMING THEIR NET REFUND AMOUNT IN CASH HERE ARE THE REQUIREMENTS:

If the claimant is the registered customer:
a. January 2004 bill
b. One (1) valid ID with photo and signature like:
  - Driver's License
  - PRC License
  - Passport
  - New SSS / GSIS / TIN ID
c. Xerox copies of the valid ID and January 2004 bill

If claimant is an authorized representative of the registered customer:
a. January 2004 bill
b. Authorization letter signed by the registered customer naming the claimant as representative
c. One (1) valid ID of the registered customer with photo and signature
d. Two (2) valid IDs of claimant/representative
e. Xerox copies of these documents :
  - Two (2) valid IDs of claimant/representative
  - One (1) valid ID of registered customer
  - January 2004 bill

These IDs are also valid:
a. Philhealth ID
b. Senior Citizen's ID
c. Postal ID
d. Firearm's License
e. Original NBI Clearance with picture and signature
f. Credit Card with photo and signature

FOR CUSTOMERS WITH TERMINATED ACCOUNTS :
The Meralco refund for customers with terminated accounts is still ongoing. For customers with terminated or permanently disconnected services, please call Refund Hotline 1622-8888 or 632-8888.

MERALCO REFUND CENTERS
Branches and extension offices will be open
MONDAY to FRIDAY, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Call Refund Hotline 1622-8888 or 632-8888
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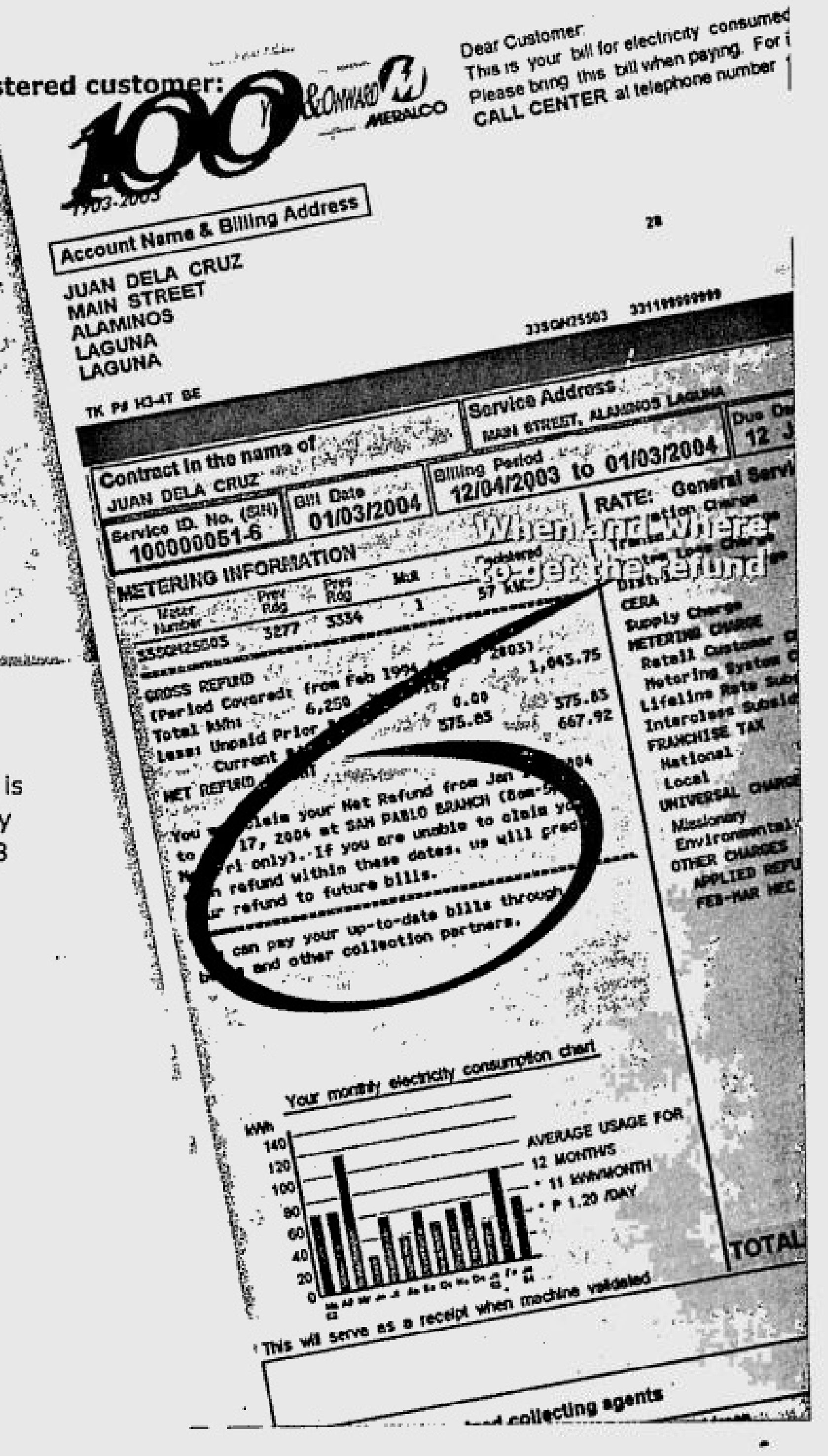
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1903-2003
Dear Customer:
This is your bill for electricity consumed
Please bring this bill when paying.
CALL CENTER at telephone number
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JUAN DELA CRUZ
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Service Address
MAIN STREET, ALAMINOS LAGUNA
Contract in the name of
JUAN DELA CRUZ
Service ID. No. (SIN)
100000051-6
Bill Date
01/03/2004
Billing Period
12/04/2003 to 01/03/2004
RATE: General Service
When and where to get the refund
METERING INFORMATION
GROSS REFUND
NET REFUND
Your monthly electricity consumption chart
AVERAGE USAGE FOR 12 MONTHS
This will serve as a receipt when machine validated
TOTAL

Probe on Lucena fire vowed

LUCENA CITY—A city councilor here vowed to investigate the fire that killed at least 20 people on New Year's eve.

"With the high number of casualties, we are seriously planning to call an investigation on the shocking incident. There's no doubt that concerned government agencies and its officials have a lot of explaining to do," Councilor Nick Pedro told the INQUIRER.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, in a statement, extended her "deepest sympathy" to the fire victims as she pointed out that the tragedy "could have been prevented if precautionary measures were observed."

The President called on the Department of Interior and Local Government through the Bureau of Fire Protection to work with all local government units in conducting thorough inspections of all vulnerable commercial or residential areas, especially in urban areas, to enforce compliance with fire safety measures under the law.

"Let us start now and let us not relent until we can get rid of these fire traps and hazards that pose a threat to public safety," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

Mayor Talaga said he would push for the adoption of an ordinance that would mandate the selling of firecrackers and pyrotechnics away from populated areas.

On Saturday, the crew from the City Engineers Office who have been conducting final clearing operations at the fire site recovered a human leg from the pile of muddy ruins.

Malik Sultan, president of local Muslim association, clarified that the male body retrieved Thursday evening was Hadji Naim Sarifada. He said their identification was based on the cellular phone on the recovered body.

Sultan blamed the government agencies concerned of "chaotic handling" on the remains of the victims.

"There were bits and pieces of human remains since day one of the recovery effort but they did not exert extra attention to properly identify the victims and the recovered body parts," he said.

Police placed the final count of fire victims to 19 persons. But with the still undetermined number of reported missing, there could be more. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

RV ESPIRITU

PRECIOUS GRAINS

This Ifugao farmer doesn't seem happy with the fruits of his labor.

WILL YOUR VOTE BE COUNTED?

THE LIES AND TRUTHS ABOUT COMELEC'S AWARD TO MEGA PACIFIC eSOLUTIONS, INC.

1. **LIE:** The P1.3 Billion Contract to supply the Automated Counting Machines valued at P1.3 Billion was awarded to the winning bidder Mega Pacific Consortium, consisting of Mega Pacific eSolutions,Inc. SK C&C Co. Ltd., ePLDT, Inc., WeSolve Open Computing, Inc. and Election.Com Ltd.

TRUTH: The P1.3 Billion Contract was NOT Awarded to Mega Pacific Consortium, but solely to Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc., as per documents submitted to the Supreme Court.*

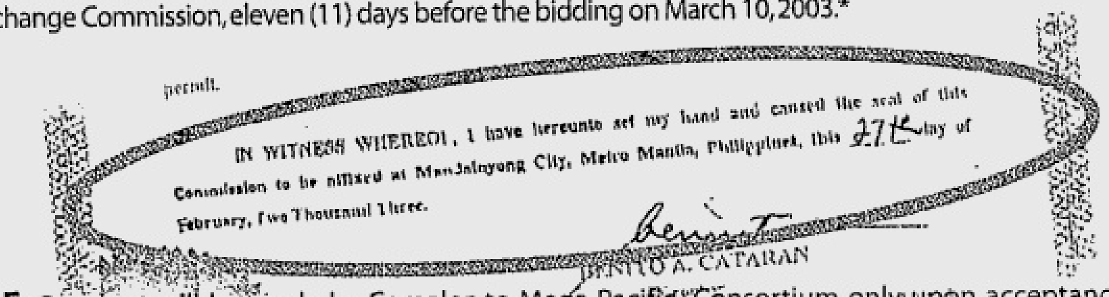
TRUTH: SK C&C. Ltd., ePLDT, Inc., WeSolve Open Pacific Computing, Inc. and Election.Com Ltd. are not consortium members, but merely suppliers of either software services and products or hardware requirements of Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc.*

TRUTH: Election.Com Ltd. and ePLDT Inc. are mere "subcontractors" of Mega Pacific eSolutions based on the records submitted by Mega Pacific eSolutions itself to the Supreme Court.*

2. **LIE:** Mega Pacific eSolutions is qualified to bid and be awarded the P1.3 Billion Contract by the Comelec.

TRUTH: Comelec's Bidding rules required that corporate bidders should have been in existence for at least THREE (3) YEARS, and if not the manufacturer, should have dealt in said goods for at least FIVE (5) YEARS.

Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc. was incorporated only on February 27, 2003 as per records of the Securities and Exchange Commission, eleven (11) days before the bidding on March 10, 2003.*



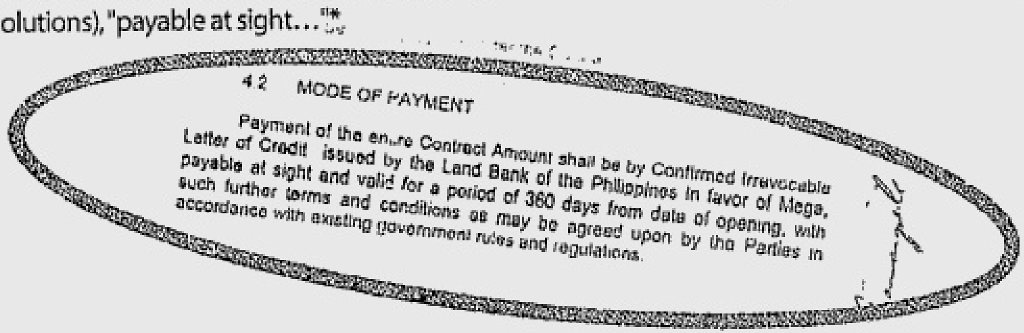
permit.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of this Commission to be affixed at Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines, this 27th day of February, Two Thousand Three.

BENITO A. CATARAN

3. **LIE:** Payment will be made by Comelec to Mega Pacific Consortium only upon acceptance of the counting machines.

TRUTH: Paragraph 4.2 of the Contract provides "Payment of the entire Contract Amount shall be by Confirmed Irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by the Land Bank of the Philippines in favor of Mega "(Mega Pacific eSolutions), "payable at sight..."*



4.2 MODE OF PAYMENT

Payment of the entire Contract Amount shall be by Confirmed Irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by the Land Bank of the Philippines in favor of Mega, payable at sight and valid for a period of 360 days from date of opening, with such further terms and conditions as may be agreed upon by the Parties in accordance with existing government rules and regulations.

4. **LIE:** Complainants represent the company that lost the bid and have vested interests.

TRUTH: Not one of the signatories in the petition for a TRO now pending at the Supreme Court represents the company that lost the bid. There were only two bidders—Mega Pacific eSolutions, Inc. and Total Information System, Inc. (TIM). (While there were 57 international and local election system providers who bought copies of the bid specs, the arbitrary Comelec bid specifications could have driven away better and less expensive election system vendors.)

5. **LIE:** The Mega Pacific Automated Counting Machines (ACM) are stand-alone...

TRUTH: If the Automated Counting Machines (ACM) are connected to another machine or a network of machines... directly or via communication lines, Internet, Wi-Fi, or any other communications facility, then they are NOT stand-alone and are therefore vulnerable to manipulation from a remote site.

If they cannot conduct an HONEST bidding process, can we trust them to conduct an HONEST election process?

"He who casts the vote decides nothing. But he who counts the votes decides everything." (Josef Stalin)

* Copies of the documents may also be secured from the Pastelero Law Office, 1503 B, Phil. Stock Exchange Center, Exchange Road, Pasig City. Tel. No. 6346486 to 89

Ex-mayor denies involvement in leader's slay

BAY, Laguna—Three days after slain peasant leader Romy Malabanan was laid to rest, former mayor Bruno "Bunoy" Ramos on Friday denied having a hand in the Dec. 23 murder.

He said he was forced to air his side after his political opponents allegedly used Malabanan's murder to ruin "my personality and my family's name."

Ramos blamed his nephew, incumbent Mayor Edwin Ramos, in the spreading of black propaganda linking him to the killing. The mayor wants to take advantage of their town mates' emotions to pursue his political ambitions in the May elections, he said.

Friend

"Ka Romy was my friend. He used to help me in my projects when I was the mayor. I have nothing against him. Why would I order [killing] him? Even Romy's friends and relatives know it's impossible for me just to kill anyone. The people of Bay knows that," the former mayor told the INQUIRER.

Ramos, who had served as mayor of this town for 16 years, also brushed off reports that he got irked with his nephew after he allegedly refused to let him run unopposed in the coming elections.

"I would never do that. The people of Bay supported me for 16 years. I did not even think of running again until some of our town mates sought my help in clearing our small town of inefficiency and corruption," he claimed.

Widow

Last week, Malabanan's widow, Flora, said her husband did not mention getting any death threats before his murder. He added that Malabanan, who was the incumbent mayor's executive assistant, also never brought up anything about the mounting political unrest in their town.

She, however, admitted that the younger Ramos told her that his uncle and political tormentor was behind the murder.

The older Ramos also named his nephew as having instigated a smear campaign against him. He said that a few hours before Malabanan's burial last Tuesday, several alleged supporters of the mayor were seen giving out white bond paper to the townsfolk. On the bond paper were written "Justice for Ka Romy! Bunoy Berdugo Ka!" (Bunoy you're a murderer!)

Mayor Ramos insisted that his uncle's ambition to reclaim the mayoral post was behind Malabanan's murder. He said no one but the older Ramos has the motive to kill his assistant.

"He knows how Romy helped me in 2001," the mayor said.

Military

Despite the accusations linking the killing to local elections, the human rights group Karapatan-Laguna points to the military as the likely culprits in Malabanan's slay.

Doris Cuario, secretary general of the group, said Malabanan had opposed the setting up of a military base camp in a barangay near the Bay-Los Baños boundary.

Mayor Ramos said he and Malabanan opposed the military presence in their town because "it could only spread fear among our people. After all, they have no business (being) there." *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Chinoy slain in attack

BALIUAG, Bulacan—A Chinese-Filipino businessman was gunned down while his companion was wounded when five armed men attacked them in Barangay Telapayong here on Tuesday last week. Police identified the fatality as Jaime Ang, 43. His companion, Antonio Parungao, the caretaker of Ang's duck farm, suffered from a bullet wound in the head. Reports said Ang and Parungao were aboard a parked Nissan Frontier when the suspects arrived and shot them. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

4 die in car mishap

ILAGAN, Isabela—Four persons were killed while four others were hurt in a vehicular accident along the national highway in Aurora town on Sunday. Senior Supt. Nelson Nario, Isabela police director, identified the fatalities as Angelbert Santos and his wife Julia of San Mateo town, Jojo Marquez and Nilda Sison, both of Aurora town. Reports said a car overtook a Delica van along the highway in Barangay Sili, Aurora, but the car's driver miscalculated and hit the van, which then hit a tricycle where the Santos couple and Sison were riding in. The impact killed the three passengers instantly. Marquez was pinned to death in the wrecked van. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

60 do saved

BAGUIO CI —Police here intercepted a shipment of dogs bound for the city's slaughterhouse and public market. Mel Alipio, country representative of the Political Animal Lobby, said the jeepney carrying at least 60 dogs from Batangas was intercepted by members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and PAL personnel along Kennon Road in Tuba, Benguet, at 2 a.m. on Dec. 31. Arrested were Gregorio Alegria and Pastor Andal, both from Padre Garcia, Batangas. Alipio said traders usually buy dogs in Batangas for as low as P50 each and sold in Baguio City and parts of Benguet for P500. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Principal found dead

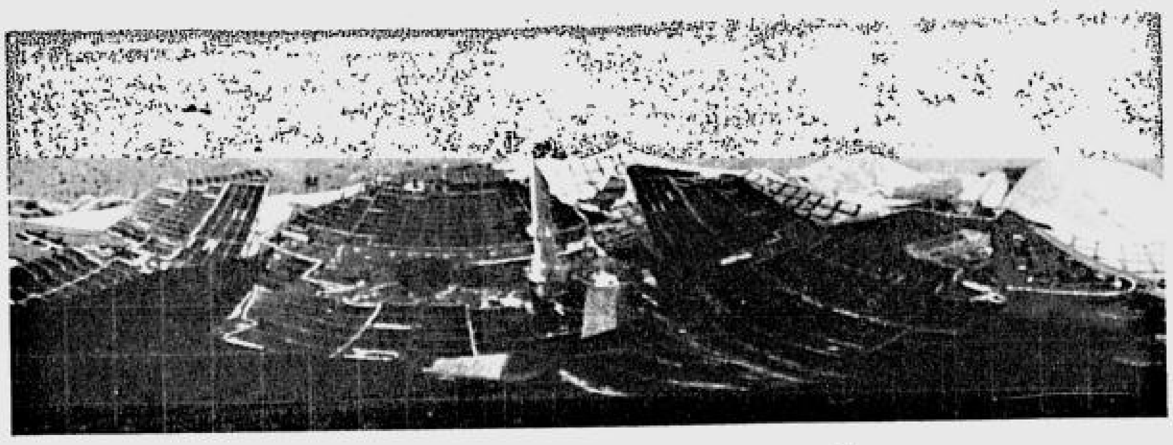
CABANATUAN CITY—A school principal in Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija was found dead inside the toilet of his office on Dec. 29. Police said Juanito Cruz, 57, principal of the La Fuente Elementary School, succumbed to a stab wound. Investigators found a bloodied samurai sword near his body. Reports said Cruz reported for work on Dec. 26 and was last seen alive that night. His wallet containing an undetermined amount of money, cellular phone and the pieces of jewelry he was wearing were missing. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Farm trader slain

COTABATO CITY—A male trader was killed in an ambush in Maguindanao last Tuesday. Nene Platon, an agricultural trader, succumbed to multiple bullet wounds in the head and body and died instantly, according to his driver Danny Francisco. Platon and Francisco were heading for home from a village in Upi, Maguindanao when five unidentified men waylaid them in Barangay Darugao at around 8:30 p.m. Francisco was driving the Yamaha DT motorcycle with Platon riding at the back. Police could not determine the motive of the ambush. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Erratum

A MIX-UP in the file names of unused stories led to the publication of the year-old article "Fire displaces families on New Year in Puerto Princesa," (Jan. 3, page A8). Our sincere apologies for the inadvertent error



"FANTASTIC" panoramic photo of the Martian landscape, the first one sent back to earth by Mars Rover Spirit on Jan.3. AP

Landing on Mars draws …

From page A1

on the red planet for the most ambitious scientific exploration of Earth's neighbor ever undertaken.

The space probe plunged through the fiery Martian atmosphere for six minutes, then bounced along the planet's rocky surface, with an approximate landing time of 8:35 p.m. (12:35 p.m. in Manila yesterday).

Cheers, hugs, tears

About 20 minutes later mission control at Jet Propulsion Laboratory erupted in cheers, hugs and tears when a signal from the craft indicated it was still functioning.

"We're on Mars. It's an absolutely incredible accomplishment," said Nasa Administrator Sean O'Keefe, who poured champagne for the mission team at the start of a press conference, relishing a success after a difficult year that included the agency's Feb. 1 Columbia space shuttle disaster that killed seven astronauts.

"We never get it right when we practice this, but this went to perfection," said Mars program chief engineer Rob Manning. "Everything happened right when we expected it to happen."

'Fantastic' photos

Within hours the Spirit rover began sending back photos of the Red Planet. The spacecraft sent the images to the passing Odyssey orbiter during a 12-minute communications window.

Among the first was a tiny black-and-white image showing a sundial on the rover. Another showed the Martian horizon and portions of the lander.

Landed upright

The spacecraft landed upright, which made it easy for the four-petaled lander that contains the rover to unfold, allowing it to take photographs, said Chris Jones, director of planetary flight programs.

The photographs, zipped to Earth across 170.5 million kilometers of space, showed a flat landscape peppered with rocks.

"This just keeps getting better and better. The pictures are fantastic," said mission science manager John Callas.

The landing procedure began at around 7:22 p.m. (11:22 a.m. in Manila) when the probe successfully rotated its thermal shield forward to protect it from the heat of the Martian atmosphere.

500M km away

Before taking the plunge, Spirit separated from the cruising stage rocket that carried it for seven months and over 500 million kilometers from Earth.

LET'S hear it for Old Glory, the jubilant Entry, Descent and Landing chief engineer Wayne Lee appears to be saying. AP, LOS ANGELES TIMES POOL

"AN INCREDIBLE" day for scientists at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California as they get a signal from the Mars Rover Spirit that it had landed on the Red Planet. The mood at Nasa is typified by Administrator Sean O'Keefe. AP, LOS ANGELES TIMES POOL

Just less than two minutes before landing, the engine opened its parachute and, 20 seconds later, the probe jettisoned the spent lead edge of its heat shield, exposing the rover's protective cone, encased in uninflated air cushions.

Six seconds before hitting the surface, the cushions inflated, and rockets on the upper shell of the shield fired to stabilize the engine. At about 15 meters from the surface, the tether to the parachute was cut.

The robot then fell freely, bouncing a dozen times on the surface before coming to rest about a kilometer away.

'Tremendous day'

"You have no idea how this feels. This is a tremendous day," said mission manager Pete Theisinger, who like his colleagues seemed almost in disbelief that the process had unfolded as envisioned.

"We've retired an awful lot of risk with this landing," Theisinger said. "We're alive on the surface."

Spirit is one of two-identical six-wheeled robots expected to roam the planet for 90 days, analyzing Martian rocks and soil for clues that could reveal whether the planet was ever a warmer, wetter place capable of sustaining life.

Mission officials said the rover won't trundle off on its own for another nine days.

Dry, cold world

Today, Mars is a dry and cold world. But ancient river channels and other water-carved features spied from orbit suggest that Mars may have had a more hospitable past.

"We see these intriguing hints Mars may have been a different place long ago," said Steve Squyres, the mission's main scientist.

The rovers were built to look for evidence that liquid water—a necessary ingredient for life—once persisted on the surface of the planet. A direct search for life on Mars is at least a decade away, Nasa scientists said.

This latest and most sophisticated effort to unlock the secrets of the Red Planet is beginning just days after the planned Dec. 25 arrival of the ill-fated European robot Beagle 2, which has not been heard from since that date.

Second rover

A second rover, Opportunity, is scheduled to land on Mars on Jan. 25.

The Mars mission, at a record cost of $820 million, will involve some 250 Nasa specialists and researchers who over three months will micro-manage the two six-wheeled rovers, weighing 180 kilograms each, roughly the size of a subcompact car.

Scientists are taking advantage of the closest approach Mars has made to Earth in 60,000 years. Nasa intends to send spacecraft to Mars at regular 26-month intervals, or each time the Earth laps the Red Planet as they both circle the sun. *AFP, Reuters and AP*

MIRACULOUS survival of a 98-year-old Iranian woman, Shahrbanoo Mazandarani, who was dug out of the rubble unscathed in the ancient city of Bam a full eight days after an earthquake destroyed the city. REUTERS

'Just give me tea … '

From page A1

spotted a hand protruding from the ruins of a collapsed building.

At first they thought they had discovered just another corpse. But after hearing a faint voice they began digging.

It still took three hours to pull the tiny but robust woman from beneath fallen timbers that had protected her from debris and created an air space in which she was able to survive against very long odds.

'It's hot'

"Chai"—the Persian word for tea—was among the first words Mazandarani uttered. But when rescuers handed the healthy-looking woman a steaming cup of the beloved Iranian drink, she pushed it away.

"It's hot," she admonished them. "Don't give it to me now."

The "miracle of Bam" rescue gave the battered nation badly needed relief from a week of gloom after a quake that killed at least 30,000. Images of her reciting from memory a poem as she lay in a hospital bed quickly filled television screens.

"God kept me alive," Mazandarani said before reciting the poem about God and his power in running the universe. She had been found wrapped in a blanket that rescuers said may have helped save her life.

Age 50 to 100

There was confusion about her age. Red Crescent spokesperson Masoumeh Malek first said Mazandarani was "about 60." Perhaps reluctant to reveal her true age, Mazandarani had said she was "in her 50s" when medics asked her how old she was.

The Red Crescent later said she was aged 97 and neighbors said the toothless woman, whose skin was deeply wrinkled and weathered, was 98. State television at one point said she was 95, but later revised that to 100.

"It's a miracle," said Red Crescent worker Abdollah Moundehali. "She had been half sheltered in a corner by a bit of wood that toppled on top of her."

Wearing a blue dark blue blouse and a traditional headscarf, Mazandarani became an instant celebrity, surrounded by dozens of journalists, medical staff, and other well-wishers eager to savor the moment.

'Yes dear'

Her white hair had several orange patches where it had apparently been dyed.

At one point in an interview from her hospital bed broadcast on state television she seemed slightly confused about where she was and had been. When asked where she was found, Mazandarani twice replied: "Right here!"

Lying on a hospital bed and propped up by pillows, Mazandarani was wrapped warmly under a layer of blankets and given sips of tea by a nurse as reporters and doctors looked on.

"She doesn't have a single scratch on her face," Malek, from the Red Crescent, said. "She can talk to us and answer our questions. When I ask her something she says 'yes dear.'" No survivors had been found in the devastated city since Thursday when three people were rescued. Experts say survival in such conditions and without food or water is unlikely even beyond three days. *Reuters*

Twins get gifts from strangers

From page A1

to serenade them with Christmas carols from home.

Warm clothes

"People have been so kind and generous," said Arlene Aguirre.

"I am especially thankful to all those people who sent gifts of clothing. We did not have any warm clothes to wear since where we come from in the Philippines (where) it's always warm and we never see snow," Arlene was quoted in the update as saying.

Single mother

Dr. Ceres Baldivia Gay of Negros Occidental sought help for the twins whose single mother could not afford the surgery they needed in the United States.

A non-profit group, Children's Chance, organized the efforts to bring the boys to New York while Philippine Airlines provided the airfare.

The CHAM is shouldering the costs of their multi-million dollar series of operations that will lead to their separation.

Carl and Clarence are craniopagus (head to head) twins. They share bones on the skull and some portions of the brain surface.

Medical bulletin

An update on the twins from the CHAM in New York said the twins spent their first Christmas in the United States as most youngsters do—enjoying the many colorfully-wrapped gifts sent by friends, family and the many faceless others, who have followed media reports in their delicate journey toward surgical separation, according to the update posted in the hospital website.

The twins had already gone through two operations in a series of surgical procedures toward separating them.

The twins will be staying at a rehabilitation hospital for nutritional, physical and speech therapy in between their operations at CHAM.

Infection cleared

"The boys are doing well and their infection has cleared," said Dr. James Goodrich, one of the two lead surgeons on the highly specialized team. He's chief of pediatric neurosurgery at CHAM.

The twins suffered slight infections related to the insertion of tissue expanders under the skin covering their skulls during the first two operations. The tissue expanders subsequently were removed.

The expanders will be used to stretch the skin covering the boys' skulls, which will then be used to cover the tops of their heads when they are finally and safely separated, the CHAM update said.

Next step

Goodrich said the next step will take place when the medical team's other lead surgeon, Dr. David Staffenberg, chief of pediatric plastic surgery at the Cham, determines they have healed enough from their last major operations to reinsert the expanders.

"No date has yet been set for that procedure or the next major surgery in the separation process," Goodrich said.

"Carl and Clarence and how well they are doing will always be a major factor in deciding when to schedule the next procedure."

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Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

INVESTOR'S LAMENT

Bert didn't give financial report

By Marinel R. Cruz

SINGER Bert Nievera and wife Carol, franchise operators of the Country Waffles chain of restaurants, failed to present financial reports to co-investors, a business partner said yesterday.

Investor and singer Ayen Munji-Laurel said the Nieveras never gave her and other investors copies of Country Waffles restaurants' quarterly and annual financial reports.

"They did not communicate with us for months," said Ayen on "The Buzz" on ABS-CBN.

The Nieveras reportedly fled to the United States before Christmas, leaving millions in debts to several people, including Ayen and show biz personalities like Annabel Rama and singer Jinky Llamanzares' mother, Mila.

A source said that Bert owes his son, singer Martin Nievera, about P3 million. Martin is in the US for a series of shows in Las Vegas.

Also on "The Buzz," Laurel's husband, Franco, said he had instructed the family lawyer to contact the Nieveras. "But we still did not get a response," he added.

AYEN Munji-Laurel

The Laurels are still studying what legal action to take, said Franco.

"But I really wish they would talk to us," Ayen said. "We hope this gets settled. If not, this is going to be messy."

The couple brought the popular California restaurant chain, Country Waffles, to the Philippines, with the first local branch set up in Greenhills, San Juan.

The couple also franchised the Country Waffles branches in Quezon City, Makati and the soon to open branch in Alabang, Muntinlupa.

The Nieveras also reportedly owned the franchise to the Bubba Gump restaurant in Greenbelt 3 in Makati City. Carol is also the chair of Hard Rock Café at Glorietta 3.

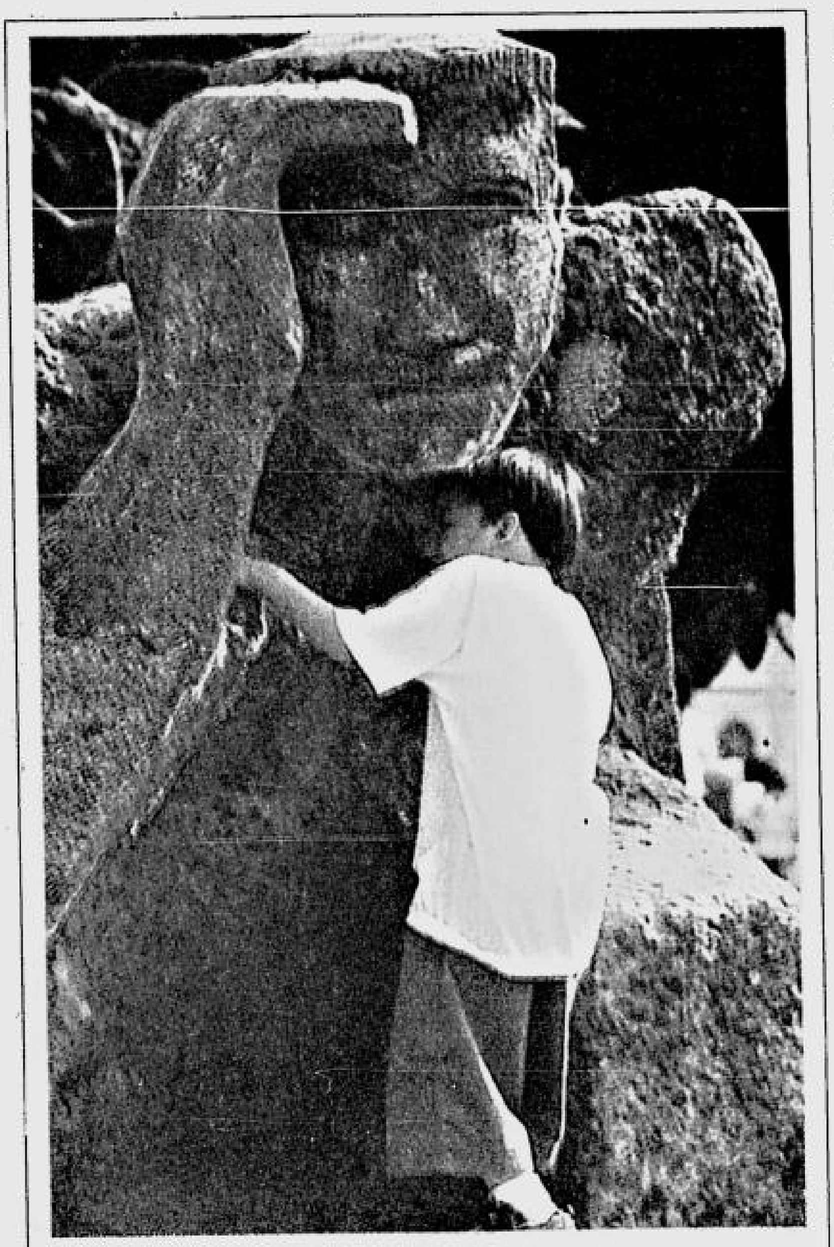
An employee of Country Waffles in Greenhills said they have not gotten their pay for three months now.

"All they gave us were promises," said the employee. "To those of us who resigned, they only gave half of our separation pay. We don't know when we'd get the other half."

The couple left the country after they allegedly received death threats from their employees at Country Waffles Greenhills.

The employees ransacked the restaurant before it closed down before Christmas. "Some of us took whatever we could, like computers and appliances," the employee said.

"I heard that Country Waffles in Makati is doing well. I guess what happened here is just mismanagement," the employee added.


'YOU LOOK, I'LL WATCH'
A giant sculpture at the Rizal Park appears to be on the lookout as a young boy explores its nooks and crannies over the weekend. Thousands visited the park Sunday as the long Christmas holiday came to an end. ERIK ARAZAS

Metro back to 'normal' as holiday break ends

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE HOLIDAY break is over. And so are the few odd days of hassle-free driving.

As classes and offices resume today, police and traffic authorities are bracing for the return of normalcy on the streets, which means traffic, traffic and more traffic.

Worse, today is the last day for the filing of the certificates of candidacy of hopefuls for the May general elections.

Candidates' mess

And that means candidates and their supporters clogging up the streets leading to the various offices of the Commission on Elections in Metro Manila.

To address the expected heavy flow of vehicles, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority will deploy additional traffic enforcers in key areas, especially around the Comelec Office in Intramuros, MMDA general manager Vergel de Dios told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Gimmick

President Macapagal-Arroyo, her running mate, Sen. Noli De Castro, and their senatorial lineup, are expected to file their COCs today.

Heavy traffic is expected because of the political gimmickry that the administration candidates have reportedly prepared.

Starting at about 4 p.m., yesterday, the volume of vehicles going to the metropolis have started to swell, creating buildups in several areas along the North and South Luzon Expressways.

Rushing back

Radio operator Manuel Roque said the traffic would worsen in the evening, when families who have gone to the provinces for the holidays rush to get back to Metro Manila for today's resumption of classes and work.

Even policemen are back on their toes as banks and schools open again.

"We don't expect any problem . There will be a day or two of adjusting, but as usual, we will continue with intensified police visibility," saod Northern Police District Director Marcelino Franco.

Kenneth Villa's long wait may soon be over

By Cathy Babao Guballa

HE WAITED four long years but now he has the best.

Kenneth Villa, the 8-year-old boy who has been bedridden for four years due to a rare mucopolysaccharide disorder called Morquio syndrome, will finally get the much needed medical attention and possibly, the surgery he needs this month.

The head of Kenneth's medical team is neurosurgeon Dr. Willy Lopez, the only Filipino doctor who was part of the team that performed the second surgery on conjoined twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre at the Children's Hospital in Montefiore (CHAM) in New York. Helping Lopez procure some of the essential tools necessary for his surgery is Dr. James Goodrich, head of pediatric neurosurgery at CHAM.

Key players

Kenneth's plight first caught the attention of Carmen Sarmiento, Executive Director of Philippine Airlines (PAL) Foundation when his story first appeared in PDI last Oct. 13. Together with Ken's aunt, Heddie, Sarmiento brought Ken's medical records to Lopez in late October.

Since then, Sarmiento has also gotten in touch with Children's Chance of Connecticut Executive Director Dorita Urrata, who in turn contacted Dr. Goodrich at CHAM to help procure a ventilator for Kenneth. Now, they are searching for a pediatric halo vest that is essential for Kenneth's forthcoming surgery.

KENNETH: Best medical team

The PAL Foundation, Urrata and Goodrich were the same people responsible for helping bring the Aguirre twins to CHAM.

Lopez and Goodrich are no strangers to each other. Both trained together 17 years ago at the Neurological Institute of New York and have since kept the lines of communication open.

When Goodrich heard about the Aguirre twins earlier this year, he called on his old friend to do an initial assessment on them in Manila, to see if they were operable. Then in October, Goodrich invited Lopez to join him for the second surgery on the twins that was performed last Nov. 24.

Now, the doctors are once again working together to improve the quality of life of another Filipino child.

For many years, no doctor wanted to touch Kenneth. He had practically zero medical attention, following an unsuccessful surgery on him in 1999.

A lack of funds also prevented the Villas from giving him the medical attention he needed. Since his operation, Ken has been cared for by maiden aunts who look after him round the clock. Lopez is hopeful that if and when surgery will be performed on Ken this month, the boy will at least be able to sit up and read the books he loves so much.

New Year's day drama

The operation should have taken place sometime in December except that Kenneth's favorite uncle, Edgar Villa, died on Nov. 11. Edgar's death was sudden and took the Villa family by surprise. Edgar had been one of those caring for Kenneth.

On New Year's day, Kenneth was rushed to the Cardinal San-

KENNETH A19

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METROBRIEFS

Old woman run over in QC

A WOMAN, about 55 years old, died after she was ran over by a bus in Quezon City the other day. Police remain clueless on her identity. At about 4 p.m. Saturday, Nicolas Salazar Prieto, 43, was driving his JAM Transit Bus along the southbound lane of the Epifanio delos Santos Avenue. When he reached the corner P. Tuazon Boulevard, a woman suddenly crossed the street. Caught by surprise, the driver ran over the woman. Prieto brought the woman to the East Avenue Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead. The woman was wearing a white T-shirt and a polka-dot skirt. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

Billiards hall fight; 1 hurt

A NIGHT of fun and merrymaking ended in chaos early yesterday morning in Valenzuela after a fight erupted inside a billiards hall. Gerwin Magdael, 25, of St. John Street, Barangay Gen. T. De Leon, was killed, police reported yesterday. The brawl erupted at 1:45 a.m. inside the Grand 8 Billiards along the MacArthur Highway in Barangay Marulas. After the melee, Magdael was found bleeding. Magdael was brought to the Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, where he died while undergoing treatment. The police have yet to determine the cause of the fight and no suspects were identified. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

RMHS Batch '71 reunion

MEMBERS of Batch '71 of Ramon Magsaysay High School in España, Manila, will hold a reunion on April 17, 2004, at the Camp Aguinaldo Officers Club. The reunion, dubbed "71@50: A Reunion of Friends," will introduce the batch's scholars for school year 2004-2005, as well as give recognition to batch members who have excelled in their chosen careers. For details, please call any of the following: Fenina Tuparan-Deang at 921-9745 or 0917-6239300, Fe Nano-Dy-Liacco at 645-8993 or 0916-4120462, Alex Arellano at 655-4287 or 0918-9193235, Freddie Mercado at 783-6846 or 493-5378, or Arsenio 'Bobit' Bautista at 749-6254 or 9019-6498572

Kenneth Villa's long wait may soon be over

From page A18

tos Medical Center for a dangerous bout of pneumonia. The Philippine Red Cross, through the PAL Foundation, provided the ambulance that brought him from home to the hospital.

Confined at the ICU on Jan. 1, Ken could hardly breathe and had no appetite at all. For a while, his immediate family was afraid that they would lose him. But perhaps, a strong spirit and a will to get better helped in the young boy's quick recovery. He has now been transferred to a regular room and will undergo a series of MRI and CT Scan exams later this week and is expected to be moved to the PGH for more examinations and finally, surgery.

Surgical plan

Lopez and the other members of the surgical team (among them spine surgeon Dr. Adrian Catbagan and pediatric pulmonologist Dr. Mike Javier) have agreed to do the surgery pro bono.

"If there is a chance for me to help, I will do it," says Lopez who has been doing many charity cases without fanfare at the Philippine Children's Medical Center, where he is also affiliated. The neurosurgeon, who is also the incoming chair of the Department of Neurosciences at the UP-PGH, is part of a breed of doctors who genuinely care for the poor.

DR. LOPEZ explains the results of the CT Scan done at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center on Kenneth to one of the boy's relatives.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

The surgery aims to strengthen the connection between Kenneth's neck and spine because there is much instability in the C1 section, owing to a compression of the cranio-vertebral junction. This condition is a result of the Morquio syndrome, which has plagued Kenneth since birth.

Lopez says there is possibly much damage to the neural tissue located in Kenneth's lower brain stem, the area that controls respiration. This is also the reason why the boy has been hooked to a ventilator for the last four years.

"We know the general problem so now we need to go into the specifics," Lopez explains.

During surgery, titanium plates will be placed into Kenneth to reduce and fix the dislocation in the C1 area. After which a pediatric halo vest, which acts as an external mobilizer, will be placed on his head to keep the area immobile. Right now, it is crucial to get a pediatric halo vest from the US as there is none available here. Goodrich and Urrata of Children's Chance have promised to source one for the operation.

Kindness of strangers

Help continues to pour in for Kenneth. The funds raised have now reached P650,000, just a little short of the P1 million the family needs to raise to cover tests, medical expenses and Kenneth's post operative care.

Ken now has a Playstation, a laptop and many books to keep him occupied for hours. With whatever little movement he can manage, he devours all the reading materials he receives. He has also learned many new tunes, which he plays using his knuckles, on a toy organ. Recently, he was given a Skycable subscription by Justice Carolina Grino Aquino.

An unknown businessman also donated P100,000: Nestle gave a whole year's supply of Nido, Ken's favorite drink. The PAL foundation, together with Children's Chance of Connecticut, has also procured a ventilator for Kenneth and the services of respiratory therapists who will monitor Kenneth from time to time.

Things have begun to look up for Kenneth. His unsinkable spirit and faith have moved the hearts of many to help improve his plight and his spirits remain high.

He is most excited about the idea of sitting up. "Ready *na talaga ako magpa-opera*," he grins when we visited him one morning. And even if he will be wheelchair-bound for the rest of his life, he remains undaunted. "*Madami naman puedeng gawin kahit naka* wheelchair. Okay *lang yun*." Looking forward he says, "*Sana* this year, *makaupo na ako para makapag-aral na sa* school." With such a steadfast faith, anything seems possible.

To help in Kenneth's recovery fund please call Heddie Villa at 457-7008 or 0916-600548.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 5, 2004
Monday after Epiphany
1st Reading: **1 Jn 3:22-4:6**
Gospel: **Mt 4:12-17, 23-25**

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to settle down in Capernaum, a town by the lake of Galilee, at the border of Zebulun and Naphtali.

In this way the word of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali crossed by the Road of the Sea, and you who live by the Jordan, Galilee, land of pagans, listen:

The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shone.

From that time on Jesus began to proclaim his message, "Change your ways: the kingdom of heaven is near."

Jesus went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people.

The news about him spread through the whole of Syria, and the people brought all their sick to him, and all those who suffered: the possessed, the deranged, the paralyzed, and he healed them all. Large crowds followed him from Galilee and the Ten Cities, from Jerusalem, Judea, and from across the Jordan.

Commentary

Today's reading records the moment when Jesus left his hometown, never to live there again. In Luke's gospel it is clearer that this decision was due to his experience of rejection at Nazareth (Lk 4:30,31). His townspeople tried, you remember, to throw him over a cliff because he said things they didn't like to hear. It is clear, however, that he was not embittered by this. Bitter people like to proclaim bad news, or when they proclaim good news there is some bitter echo in it. But he "went around all Galilee proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom." It was their loss. Nathanael was surprised when he heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, "From Nazareth?" he said, "Can anything good come from that place?" (Jn 1:46). There is no bitterness like small-town bitterness. It is small and intimate, it penetrates to the roots. But those townspeople could not infect him with their bitterness; it was they who remained bitter. Yet they were able to rob him of some of his power. "He could work no miracle there" (Mk 6:5). Not only Nazarenes but all of us have the power to poison the well of life and to stop miracles from happening. And we do it best in our own place—perhaps even in our family.

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BY R. B. VERA

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Bright prospect for Suico crack at world crown

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

CEBU CITY—The country's next hope for a world crown, the undefeated Randy "Komong Bato" Suico, moved closer to a shot at the World Boxing Association junior lightweight crown following yesterday's win by reigning champ Acelino Freitas in the lightweight category over WBO champion Artur Grigorian in Ledyard, Connecticut. ***(See related story on page A23)***

With Freitas now out of the WBA's junior lightweight category, the interim champion, Yodsanan Nanthachai of Thailand, will now have to face the highest-rated challenger, the top-ranking Joel Casamayor of Cuba.

However, Casamayor is out of the picture as he is slated to battle Diego Corrales for the WBO junior lightweight crown in a grudge rematch set on March 6 in Connecticut.

As WBA No. 2, Suico could end up facing Yodsanan for the junior light title.

Suico, the Oriental-Pacific Boxing Federation champ, is unbeaten in 20 fights (17 KOs).

The 24-year-old Suico is slated to defend his OPBF throne here on Jan. 31 against a top Korean challenger.

Paragua grabs No. 1 rank

By Marlon Bernardino, *Contributor*

IT WAS only fitting that the most bemedalled Filipino athlete in the last Southeast Asian Games is ranked No. 1 in his sport.

PARAGUA

Mark Paragua, the rapid chess champion who picked up two more golds in the team events in the Vietnam SEAG, was officially listed as the top Filipino player with an ELO rating of 2529 among the 55 Filipino pawnpushers listed in the Fide January ratings released yesterday.

Grandmaster Rogelio (Joey) Antonio Jr. dropped to second with an ELO rating of 2523 while fellow GM Eugene Torre slipped to third. Antonio, who won the Thailand Open, and Torre, who is slowly regaining his old form, were with Paragua in the men's rapid and standard chess champion squads.

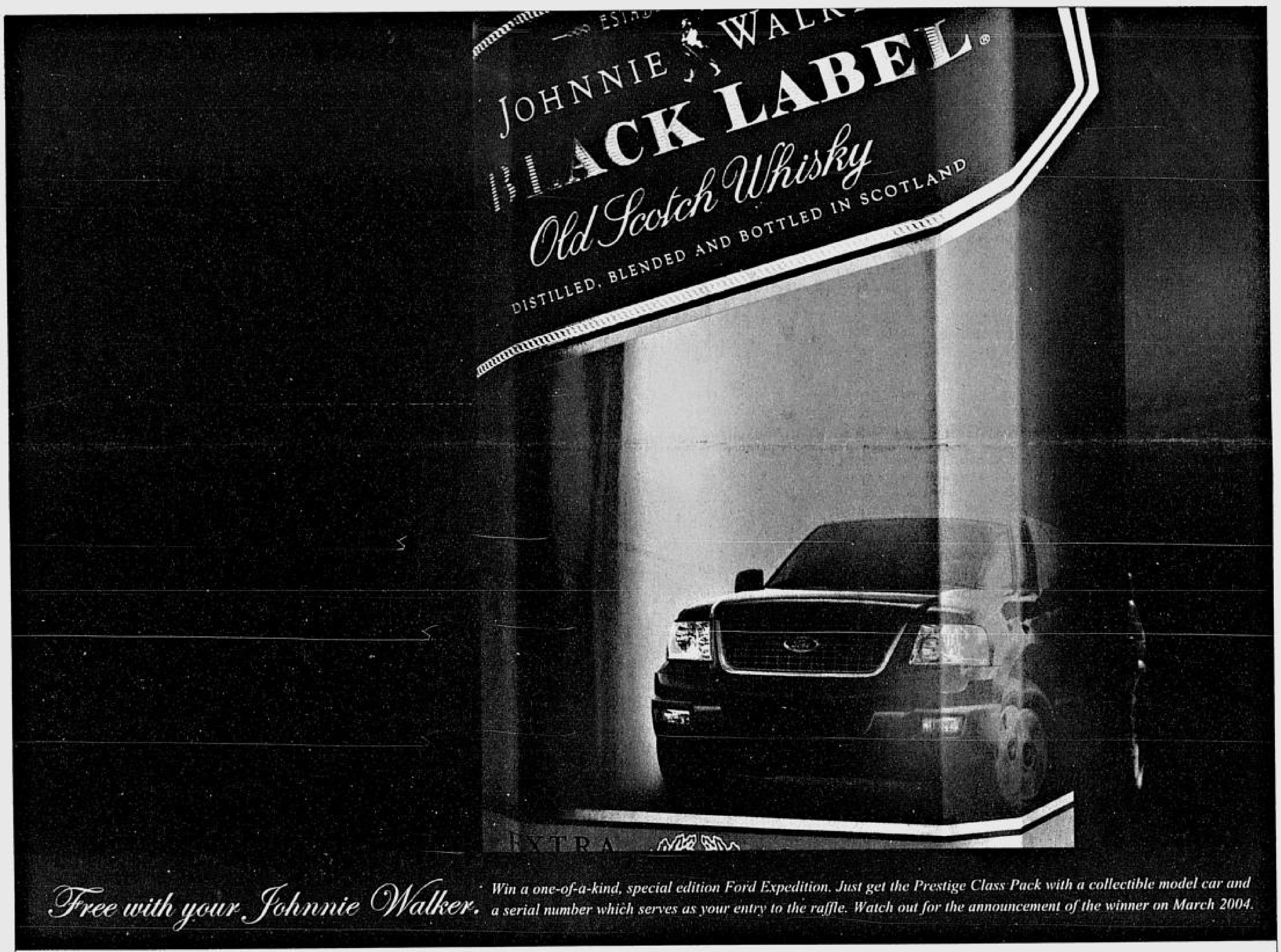
"I'm happy that my hard work paid off. The GM title is my next target," said Paragua, who will be honored as the major awardee for chess by the Philippine Sportswriters Association during its Awards Night on Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion.

The other Filipinos in the top 30 are GM Rogelio Barcenilla 2502, IM Buenaventura Villamayor 2469, NM Emmanuel Senador (ELO 2453), IM Joseph Sanchez 2450, IM Enrique Paciencia 2449, IM Idelfonso Datu 2443, IM Ricky De Guzman 2439, IM Richard Bitoon 2430, IM Ronald Dableo 2426, IM Nelson Marino II 2416, IM Chito Garma 2415, IM Petronio Roca 2414, FM Fernie Donguines 2413, NM Yves Rañola 2410, IM Jayson Gonzales 2403, IM Rico Mascariñas 2399, IM Barlo Nadera 2390, IM Angelo Young 2390, NM Rolando Nolte 2389, NM Allan Sayson 2382, IM Luis Chiong IV 2368, NM John Paul Gomez 2357, IM Ronald Bancod 2354, NM Darwin Laylo 2328, NM Roderick Nava 2317, NM Oliver Barbosa 2311 and NM Jake Banawa 2310.

In the distaff side, Brisbane, Australia-based Woman International Master Arianne Bo Caoili remained on top with an ELO rating of 2250.

The other Filipinas in the list are WNM Christine Castellano 2139, WIM Beverly Mendoza 2131, WNM Joann Toledo 2114, WFM Sheerie Joy Lomibao 2089, WIM Cristine Rose Mariano 2084,Glenda Baylon 2068, WNM Minda Flores 2063, WNM Jonalyn Torres 2050, WNM Rusela Joya 2013 and WNM Sherily Cua 1954.

The 19-year-old Tondo-born Paragua, who also thanked Hector Tagaysay of Filway Marketing and the Philippine Sports Commission, is the youngest Filipino qualifier in the Fide Mens' World Championships scheduled in July.



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Per DOH-BFAD Permit No 0909 series of 2003

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Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 3631 Series of 2003.

NCR qualifying for Students' caging Jan. 8

TOP teams from the UAAP and NCAA have been invited to compete in the National Capital Region (NCR) eliminations for the 58th National Students Basketball Championship beginning Jan. 8 at the Rizal Colieum.

The organizing Basketball Association of the Philippines had also requested the Cusa, Naascu and other school leagues to field teams in the annual, three-division championship that will determine NCR's representatives to the national finals set Feb. 22-28 at the Enverga gym in Lucena City.

Quintelano "Tiny" Literal, BAP president, said the national champion will represent the country in the Asian University Basketball Championship (AUBC) to be held either in China or the Philippines this April.

Literal appointed Fiba International Referee Ariel Bermeo to act as tournament director for the NCR eliminations being supported by Burlington Socks, Cebuana Lhuillier, Molten, YKL Color Films, BESTANK, Health Options and Federal Express.

Last year, St. Francis of Assisi College emerged overall champion after beating University of the East in the national finals held in Legazpi, Bicol.

Expected to participate are the champions of different collegiate leagues, such as Letran (NCAA), Far Eastern University (UAAP), University of Manila (Naascu), Las Piñas College (Cusa) and Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasay (PSCUAA) in the men's division.

The women's field is expected to include powerhouse Adamson University and Lyceum College.

Also invited to participate are San Sebastian College, Ateneo, San Beda, Philippine Christian University, UST, La Salle University, Perpetual Help University, Trinity College, Central College of the Philippines, St. Claire College, Jose Rizal University, Mapua, St. Jude College, PMI, University of Makati, World Citi College and Earist.

Also competing in the national finals are qualifiers from the other BAP regions, which are expected to hold their respective elimination tournaments within the week.

Delasin back in limelight with Quirimit

TOUR Pilipinas champ Quirimit (above) and golf queen Delasin take different paths to victory.

A STATUS gap may be the only wall that divides golfer Dorothy Delasin and cyclist Arnel Quirimit. But on Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion, the two will stand side by side.

In recognition of their respective feats that helped make year 2003 a big one for local sports, Delasin and Quirimit will be feted as two of the eight major awardees by the Philippine Sportswriters Association.

Co-Athletes of the Year Manny Pacquiao and Christian Jan Suarez lead the big achievers to be honored by the sportswriting fraternity during the two-hour rites televised over NBN-4, sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Color and supported by the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Basketball Association, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and San Miguel Corp.

In attendance will be no less than the First Couple, President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

Meantime, PSA president Bert Cuevas said invitations to the honorees and guests have already been sent.

Delasin triumphed in Mobile, Alabama while Quirimit spread-eagled the field in the dusty, but mostly well-paved roads of Luzon, a testimony to the Filipino athlete's capability to excel both locally and internationally.

Delasin, born to Filipino parents living in Daly City in San Francisco, scored her first victory in the Giant Eagle Classic two years ago to clinch the LPGA Rookie of the Year title. That earned for her the 2001 PSA Athlete of the Year award along with billiards' Efren "Bata" Reyes.

Although she'd win the same event the next year, the 23-year-old Filipina, now re-located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, would experience a long title drought in her next 32 tournaments.

That was, until she beat Korean Hee Won Han in a playoff to bag the Tournament of Champions last November.

Locally, it was Qurimit stamping his class in the revived Tour Pilipinas.

After a five-year hiatus, the so-called "Boys of Summer" were back on the road for a stretch of 18 days and 15 stages in the months of April and May.

Of the 84 cyclists, it was the 27-year old Quirimit who emerged the best, beating fellow RP teammates Merculio Ramos and Ryan Tanguilig for the P250,000 cash prize and becoming the first Pangasinense after Bernard Llentada in 1991 to win the cycling odyssey.

Aside from Delasin and Quirimit, also named as major awardees were Paul Asi Taulava (pro basketball), James Yap (amateur basketball), Mark Paragua (chess), Patty Dilema (Jockey of the Year) and Wind Blown (Horse of the Year).

Amateur cage standout Alex Compton and PBA courtside anchor Lala Roque will host the PSA awards night.

FRIENDSHIP TILT

Pinoy jungolfers take on Japanese

THREE of the four Philippine Sportswriters Association awardees try to prove their worth against a tough opposition as the new jungolf season kicks off with the Philippines-Japan Friendship tournament starting today at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club.

It will be a short 36-hole showdown between the country's jungolf aces against visitors from Fukuoka, Japan, with Jayvie Agojo, Dottie Ardina and Allenby Jiro Ramos—all set to be cited by the PSA this coming Friday for their international exploits in 2003—leading the Philippine contingent.

Preceding the 8 a.m. tee-off is the hitting of the ceremonial balls by LPGA mainstay Jenny Rosales, Jungolf Foundation of the Philippines chair Amalia Montecillo and Willy Ocier and Jerry Tiu, chair and president, respectively, of the Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club.

They are expected to be joined by top officials of the Philippine-Japan Camaraderie Association.

Up for grabs in the tourney capping the holiday break series of the Samsung Jungolf Tour are division honors for boys and girls in Class A (15-17 years), Class B (13-14) and Class C (11-12) and the special division for players 10 years and under.

Tournament sponsors are the Tagaytay Midlands, IWSI, Comworks, Milkjoy, La Jolla Golf, Bong Lopez Golf Management and Mr. Nelson de Villa.

The Japanese, who arrived yesterday, are led by Hirotsugu Kokubo, Katsuya Ijiri, Kouji Kunikata, Tooru Tunoda, Kensuke Uemoto, Yuuki Khono, Yuuta Tachikawa, Kazuhiro Ohtani, Ryuui Hashimoto and Kenshiro Ikegami.

They will be matching up against local contenders who have been sharpened up by the exciting holiday battles held in Southwoods, Alabang and Riviera.

Agojo, the biggest name in the field, will be ranged against the likes of *balikbayan* Cristina Corpuz, Remijin Camping, Katrina Gonzales, Matet Salivio, Linnel and Geleen Handog.

Ramos eyes another victory against veterans JR Gonzales and JP de Claro and Ardina faces a big challenge from Ma-an Legaspi when she returns after a long absence in the school season series.

Magaway, Dandan lead march of faves

THIRD seed Laurence Magaway and sixth seed Kle Dandan downed separate rivals yesterday to enter the boys' 18-under quarterfinals in the 15th Andrada Cup Age-Group Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Magaway stamped his class over Johnwill Baldonado, 6-2, 6-1, while Dandan scored a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Miguel Narvaez.

In the boys' 14-under class, second seed Joshua Tan Ho defeated Ernesto Pantua III, 6-2, 6-2, No. 3 El Santo Santos outplayed Kim Ivor Saraza, 6-1, 6-2, No. 4 Ken Patrick Arevalo outplayed Akio Hari Ong Sy, 6-4, 7-5, and No. 5 Jose Lorenzo Opulencia conquered Joseph Baldonado, 6-2, 6-2, to book quarterfinal slots in this weeklong event sponsored by the Philippine Sports Commission and Dunlp balls.

In the girls' 14-under action, No. 1 Trudy Amoranto clobbered Christine Patrimonio, 6-1, 6-0, No. 2 Bambi Zoleta downed Abe Chihiro, 6-1, 6-3, No. 4 Nikki Manalo blasted Mandi Garcia, 6-0, 6-0, Zhane Quitara beat Clarisse Patrimonio, 6-2, 6-2, and Martina Rivero outclassed Judy Em Botor, 6-1, 6-0.

First-round winners in the boys' 16-under class were Ralph Kevin Barte, Jarryd Manduriao, Juan Carlos Pantua, Dan Jeffrey Onate, Johnwill Baldonado, Francis Onate, Russell Arcilla Jr., Raimarte Padigos, Katoh Taiki, Vincent Atienza, Marvin Serito, Julius Lagman and Kutsunugi Kyouhei.

In unisex 10-under play, No. 2 Jacob Lagman whipped John Emmanuel Garcia, 6-1, 6-1, to advance to the semis against Tim Polero, a 6-2, 6-2 winner over twin brother Kim. Angelo Joseph Rivero beat Alfonso Opulencia, 6-3, 6-3, to advance against Patricia Orteza, who won by default over No.1 Pocholo Macalino.

Goodbye, NBL; make way for NBC

GOODBYE NBL. From now on, it's going to be NBC or National Basketball Conference.

After a relatively successful 2003 season, organizers and supporters of the country's regional cagefest have decided to return the name NBL to its owner, the Basketball Association of the Philippines, and launch their 2004 program under NBC.

``We have no quarrel with BAP," said secretary general Tito Palma yesterday.

``BAP owns NBL and we have to follow its order for us not to use it anymore."

But regional caging continues, according to Palma. ``We will have a more vigorous, sustainable program. In fact, we are opening the new year by staging the Panasonic Sinulog Invitational Cup tournament on Jan. 20-25 in Cebu City.

At least seven teams will see action in the cagefest. These are the top four teams in the last Regional Conference, namely, champion Compak/Shineway-Ozamiz, M. Lhuillier-Cebu, Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo and the Ilocos Sur Snipers, two foreign teams from either Indonesia, Korea or Hong Kong and a guest team.

Ozamiz, Cebu, Spring-San Pablo and Ilocos Sur will be allowed to beef up their respective lineups with one import each, according to Palma.

After the Panasonic Sinulog Invitational, San Pablo City Mayor Florante ``Boy" Aquino will host NBC's second event this year—the Seven Lakes Invitational Cup—on Feb. 12-15 at the Aquino Stadium.

NBC's major events—the National Conference and the Regional Conference—will complete the new cage body's program.

The National Conference will be held in March, while the Regional Conference will be staged in October.

How much 'lechon' does Mayor Vilma Santos eat?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

TODAY is the first Monday of 2004. There are exactly 360 days left in the young year.

The calendar started last Thursday, but to workers and ordinary wage-earners, like us, the new year begins today, when we all again start plodding, pushing, rushing, running.

There's a big daily battle waiting to be waged out there.

We owe, yes we owe, so it's off to work we go.

Of course, unlike the trim champion boxer, we prepare to do battle plump and overweight, our belts stuffed tight, crying with holiday fat.

Oh, your reporter here would've been puffing hard, like an overloaded truck crawling uphill, if not for a timely break from the Christmas table.

Thanks to a tip, an enticing invitation actually, that came the day after Christmas.

At least, the waistline doesn't groan and bulge as much as it had in past holidays.

***

And all we had needed was this text message:

Kain tayo. Sinigang Visayan style-*tangige wid kangkong*, eggplant, onions, tomatoes, semi-hot pepper for tangy flavor. Heaven!

That was from the venerable senior desk editor, Rustie Otico, who texted from his green, quiet hideaway in Cavite.

Explained our reluctant dietician:

Simple fare can be reinvigorating after festive dishes. *Kamatis lang paasim*. More dan usual. Not as sour as sampaloc but *yon ang nasanayan ko*. Fisher folk in Panay n Negros usually cook it *dat* way. We call it sinabawan (from *sabaw*).

It's actually a top favorite, mainly among seaside folk in the country.

Batangueños call that well-loved fish dish, boiled and celebrated around a head or slices of the legendary *maliputo, kinamatisan*.

This, more or less, should be the same fish broth they love to call *tula* or *tola* in other Southern regions.

Yes, we did follow the cure for holiday table nausea. We failed to secure *tanigue*, but got a *talakitok* head instead.

Boiled it as instructed, using rice washing. Heaven, indeed!

***

Our dietician, who has remained eternally slim and sharp, is right.

Nothing beats simple fare after the bedlam and partying of the Yuletide.

We again received a number of Christmas gifts and we take this opportunity to sincerely thank those who remembered us while celebrating the birthday of the Lord Jesus.

You bet Rustie Otico's gift was both effective and very memorable.

Much later, our old friend, former President Joseph Estrada, again sent in his greetings, a well-manicured card, simply and sincerely signed ERAP.

A newfound friend, Irene Valenton of San Marcelino, Zambales made a most unique way of expressing sincere Christmas wishes.

First, she reported there's a turtle hatchery in San Antonio (also in Zambales). And that they released many baby turtles (on the night of Dec. 28). She said they officially gave them names and the tiny turtles would be documented.

Now, listen to this: "I released 1 turtle wid ur name n also 1 turtle wid d name of ur colleague Conrad. Hev a magical day!"

Conrad is, of course, Conrad de Quiros, Irene Valenton's favorite columnist here at the INQUIRER.

***

Anyway, Irene would be glad to hear that, last Dec. 27, our group in Pangao, a cool, tree-lined village some seven kilometers from downtown Lipa City, was able to bring simple joy to poor farm kids.

Cash and assorted goodies, like clothes, toys, candies, were distributed. The children, together with their parents, were treated to sumptuous snack of *pancit*, menudo, sandwich, *puto*, cold juice.

There was unmistakable happiness in the faces of the innocent kids.

But here's the bad news. For the first time in years, the gift-giving has been going on for four years now, I noticed the poor health in a bigger number of these farm children.

They appeared pale and limp, their noses running. I observed closely, I talked to some of them, and they were all hard of breathing.

I was convinced they were all suffering from respiratory ailments.

You see, I had all the while suspected that the poor health of these luckless children was being caused by the foul, nauseating, poisonous smell that continues to emanate from a big, improperly maintained piggery located at the residential area in Pangao.

We had talked to the piggery owner, offered him material support to improve the facilities of his farm. We even invited one expert who also gave him tips on how to contain the poisonous emissions.

***

The owner promised to cooperate. But the menace and slow death continue.

Bothered, I again asked around. I talked to residents.

The unanimous response was one of frustration. And hatred, of course.

I asked if the problem has already reached the Office of the City Mayor, Ms Vilma Santos.

However, many of those I talked to replied by sarcastically wondering if Mayor Vi knows Pangao exists.

For a fact, they said, no garbage truck has ever strayed into their poor barangay.

Well, this is not an appeal for the elder residents, they can take care of themselves.

But the poor children in Barangay Pangao, forever threatened by the poisonous, disease-carrying emissions from the piggery, deserve a better break, more attention and care, than the simple party we hold for them once a year.

We have to save the helpless kids!

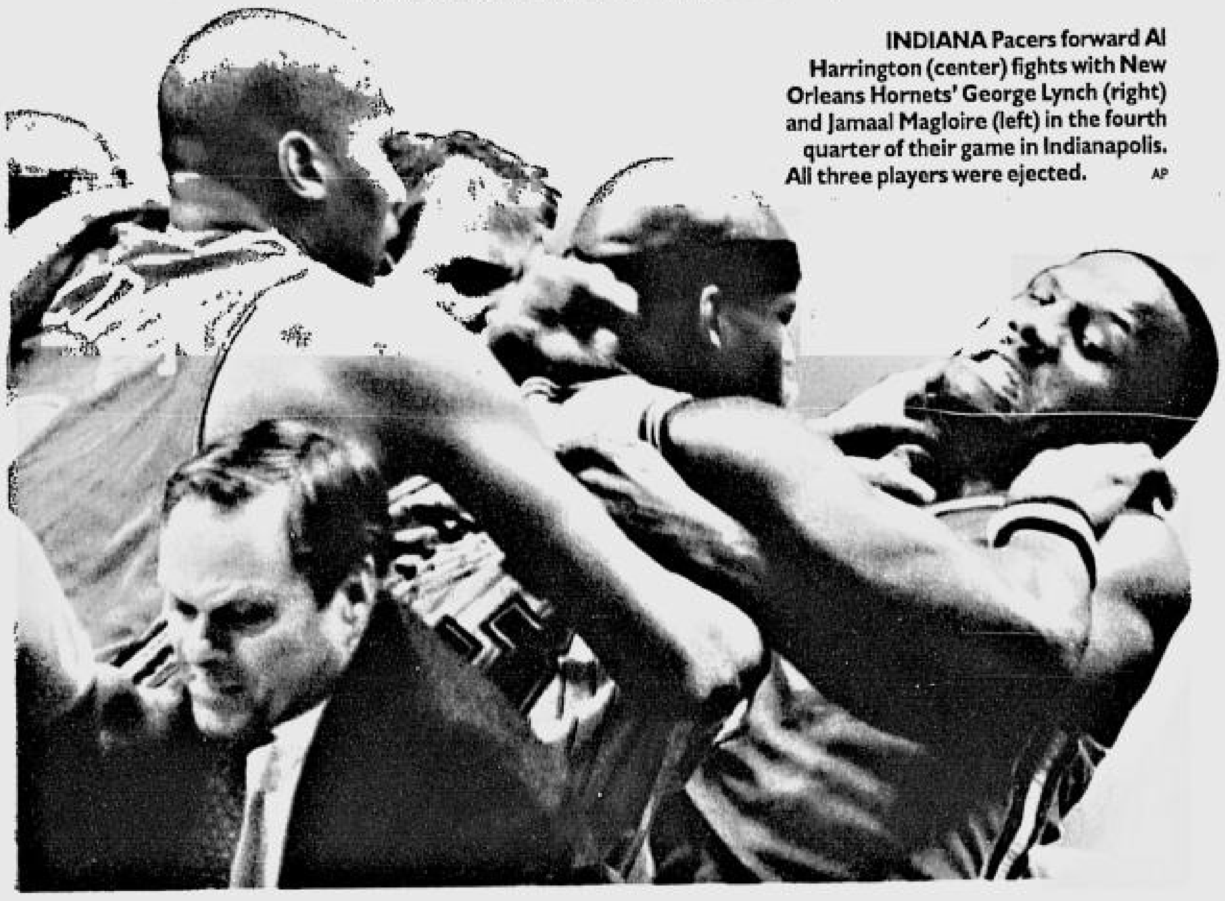
One barangay *kagawad*, also a church person, said they could not do anything because the piggery owner knows his way around.

He said the owner has strong connections and never fails to send a *lechon* or a whole pig to top barangay officials, or local health authorities, whenever a problem arises.

This problem is crying for official action.

I'm personally protesting about the sickening situation in Purok 4, Barangay Pangao to the Mayor of Lipa City.

I also trust Mayor Vi doesn't eat that much lechon.



INDIANA Pacers forward Al Harrington (center) fights with New Orleans Hornets' George Lynch (right) and Jamaal Magloire (left) in the fourth quarter of their game in Indianapolis. All three players were ejected. AP

Snow blows hot as Sixers halt Spurs

SAN ANTONIO—Eric Snow scored 18 of his 20 points in the second half and Philadelphia, playing without Allen Iverson, beat San Antonio, 83-77, Saturday to end the Spurs' 13-game winning streak.

San Antonio's unbeaten streak dated to early December and was the longest in the NBA this season. The win broke a four-game road losing streak for the 76ers.

"Our whole thing was coming out here and getting a consistent effort," Snow said. "We never even talked about them winning 13 straight or us not having won here in like 17 years. That never came up."

Derrick Coleman also had 20 points for the 76ers, 12 after halftime, and grabbed 11 rebounds. Glenn Robinson finished with 16 points and Kenny Thomas had 12 points and 15 rebounds.

"We're a lot better ballclub when he plays the way he did tonight," Sixers coach Randy Ayers said. "We got great leadership out of Coleman."

Hedo Turkoglu led San Antonio with 16 points, while Tim Duncan had 11 points and 13 rebounds. Bruce Bowen, Rasho Nesterovic and Tony Parker all added 10 points.

In Los Angeles, Mike Bibby scored 23 points, Doug Christie had a season-high 22 on 10-for-12 shooting to help the Kings beat the Clippers for the 16th time in their last 21 meetings, 116-109. Peja Stojakovic, the NBA's second-leading scorer, finished with 21.

Predrag Drobnjak scored 22 points for the Clippers, who played the final 17:40 without starting point guard Marko Jaric after he sprained his left foot.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Larry Brown wasn't around for the end of his 900th career NBA coaching win after being mistakenly ejected in the third quarter. (See related story.)

In Memphis, Tennessee, Stromile Swift scored 14 points and grabbed a season-high 15 rebounds as Memphis dominated the inside to beat the Magic, 112-103.

Swift shot 6-of-10, blocked two shots and had five offensive rebounds as Memphis controlled the boards, 51-30. Memphis also outscored Orlando, 62-28, in the paint.

Memphis handed out 35 assists, a season high, led by 10 from Jason Williams.

In other NBA games: Celtics d. Bulls, 86-77; Pacers d. Hornets, 91-84; Rockets d. Jazz, 84-63; Mavericks d Timberwolves, 119-112; Hawks d. Nuggets, 84-76.

Brown 'misses' milestone

DETROIT, Michigan—Larry Brown's Detroit Pistons gave their coach his 900th National Basketball Association win on Saturday, but Brown wasn't courtside to see the final score go up.

Tayshaun Prince scored 20 points as the Pistons withstood a fourth-quarter comeback by Golden State and posted their fourth straight victory, 99-93.

Richard Hamilton received a technical foul with 4:33 left in the third quarter and Brown got one two seconds later. Thinking the initial technical was on him and believing he had been ejected, Brown headed to the locker room.

Play was stopped for a few minutes while officials corrected the misunderstanding and tried to retrieve Brown. But the 63-year-old coach opted not to return.

Assistant coach Mike Woodson directed the team the rest of the way as the Pistons set an NBA single-season record by holding their opponent under 100 points for the 34th consecutive game. They broke the mark set in 2000-01 by the New York Knicks.

Brown is in his first season with the Pistons after stints with Denver, New Jersey, San Antonio, the Los Angeles Clippers, Indiana and Philadelphia. *AFP*

Hewitt, Molik rout Hungarian rivals

PERTH, Australia—Former world No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt beat Artila Savolt, 6-2, 6-2, Sunday as Australia beat Hungary, 3-0, in its opening match at the Hopman Cup mixed teams tennis tournament.

Earlier, Alicia Molik beat Hungary's Petra Mandula, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2, to put Australia up 1-0. Molik and Hewitt beat Mandula and Savolt, 7-6 (5), 6-1, in the mixed doubles.

Mandula had Molik in trouble in the second set, leading by a set and 4-0 in the tiebreaker before Molik charged back into the match. After being outplayed for the majority of the match, Molik grew in confidence and won 16 of the last 19 points.

Hewitt needed only 54 minutes to beat Savolt.

"I thought I was pretty aggressive," said Hewitt. "Even though I hit a few more unforced errors I am still pushing and dictating points."

Belgium plays Slovakia and Russia takes on France in matches Monday in the eight-team event. *AP*

HEWITT stretches for a forehand volley during his match against Savolt of Hungary. Hewitt prevailed, 6-2, 6-2. AP

Freitas decisions Grigorian, seizes WBO 'light' title

MASHANTUCKET, Connecticut —Acelino Freitas of Brazil knocked down Artur Grigorian of Uzbekistan four times Saturday to capture the WBO lightweight title in a unanimous decision.

Judge Clark Sammartino scored it 119-108, while Melvina Lathan and Don O'Neill had it 116-107.

Freitas had a point taken away in the 10th round for a low blow.

Before an enthusiastic contingent of Brazilian fans, the flashy, wild-swinging Freitas (35-0) scored knockdowns in the fourth, sixth, seventh and eighth rounds. He was in control of the bout from the opening bell.

Grigorian (36-1) never strayed from his mechanical, patient style, even after he fell way behind.

In the fourth round, Freitas unleashed a right uppercut that floored Grigorian. He put on a furious rush in an effort to score the knockout.

But Grigorian, who took two more hard rights to the body before the round ended, managed to continue.

Freitas danced around the ring in the 12th, and a frustrated Grigorian failed to catch his opponent.

Freitas has built his record up against top competition. Including Grigorian, Freitas' last five opponents have combined to go 114-5-2. Freitas has beaten Joel Casamayor, who was 26-0, and Daniel Attah, who was 20-0-1. *AP*

Legendary Rose admits betting on baseball

PHILADELPHIA—Pete Rose admits in his upcoming autobiography that he gambled on baseball, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported Saturday.

The newspaper cited an unidentified source who was briefed on the book.

The New York Times, citing a source in major league baseball, reported Wednesday that Rose admitted to betting on baseball at a meeting with commissioner Bud Selig.

Rodale Inc., which is publishing "My Prison Without Bars," said the book will go on sale Thursday. Cathy Gruhn, publicist for the Emmaus publishing company, declined to comment to the Inquirer on the book's contents.

Selig did not comment to the Inquirer. However, the newspaper reported Saturday that sources close to Selig said he has not made a decision about Rose's application for reinstatement, and any missteps in the book could cost Rose.

Rose's ban from baseball prevents him from being eligible for the Hall of Fame. *AP*

Quest for Olympic boxing gold resumes

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

IT IS business as usual for the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines when the country hosts the 22nd Asian Boxing Olympic Qualifying tournament on Jan. 10-18 at the Puerto Princesa City Coliseum in Palawan. Twenty-four slots in 11 weight categories are up for grabs in this first of three zone qualifiers for the 2004 Athens Games.

"We are ready and determined to go to Athens," said tireless Abap president Manny Lopez, stressing that the boxing association is not disheartened but keen on winning that long-sought Olympic gold medal despite the decline of amateur boxing over the past four consecutive Olympics, including that embarrassing medal shutout in the 2004 Sydney Games. "This time, we are confident that our boys will do us proud."

Spearheading the never-say-die Philippine team is lightflyweight Harry Tañamor, Cagayan de Oro City's veteran internationalist who won the lone gold medal in the last Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam. A Philippine Sportswriters Association amateur boxing awardee for 2003, the 25-year-old Tañamor also won the gold medals in last year's First Goa International Boxing Championships in India and the inaugural Afro-Asian Games in Hyperabad, also in India. Tañamor was also the PSA top amateur boxer for 2002 when he captured a silver medal in the Busan Asian Games, giving boxing its best finish in the Asiad.

Joining Tañamor in the team are flyweight Violito Payla, Sydney Olympic and bantamweight Arlan Lerio, featherweight Junard Ladon, lightweight Florencio Ferrer, lightwelterweight Mark Jason Melligen, welterweight Francisco Joven, middleweight Chris Camat and lightheavyweight Maraon Golez. They will be coached by battle-tested Greg Caliwan, Boy Velasco and Pat Gaspi.

"I'm proud of this great team," said former Manila Mayor Mel Lopez, a past president of the Abap and presently a member of the executive committee of the International Amateur Boxing Association (Aiba), the ruling body for the sport. "The boxers have trained too hard and traveled too far in their quest for Olympic gold. They are especially expected to do a good job and, pretty soon, restore their place in international boxing."

Under the guidance of the father-and-son team of Mel and Manny Lopez, it is only in boxing where Filipino athletes had won medals in recent Olympic history. In the 1988 Seoul Games, Leopoldo Serantes won a bronze medal; Roel Velasco won another bronze in Barcelona in 1992; while Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco won a silver medal in Atlanta in 1996, duplicating the silver-medal victory of Anthony Villanueva in Tokyo in 1964 when the Abap was then headed by the late sportsman nonpareil Eugenio "Gene" Puyat.

This Asian qualifier, supported by Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes and Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn, is the first of three qualifying series which stakes a total of 38 slots for Asia in the Athens Olympics. China and Pakistan will host the second and third qualifying tournaments.

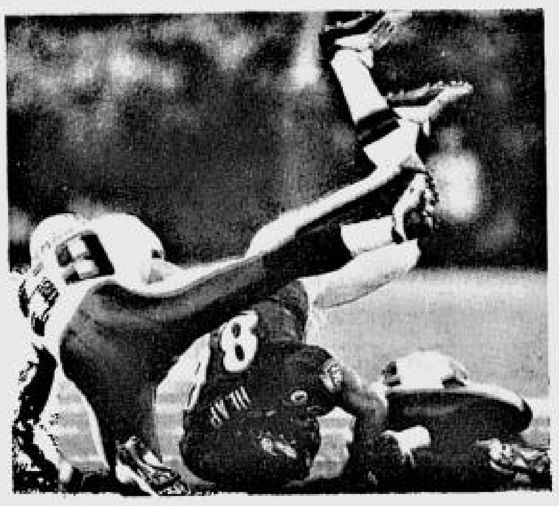
With more than 30 countries in the fold, the other teams to recon with, aside from host Philippines, are Korea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Japan and Thailand, which dominated the controversy-laden boxing competitions of the last SEA Games in Vietnam.

***

POTPOURRI. I will be one of the entries in the annual Bulacan-Cavite cockfighting dual meet, a one-day affair hosted by Sen. Ramon Revilla and Bulacan lawyer Pete Principe at the Cavite Coliseum in Bacoor on Jan. 11. With little fanfare, this friendly series is being held for almost nine years now in the spirit of fun, sportsmanship and camaraderie . . . I'm also taking this opportunity to congratulate my esteemed friend and former Evening Post colleague Rey Briones for emerging co-champions in the recent "Affordable 5-Cock Derby" at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. Rey has been on a roll ever since he won the biggest prize of all—the World Slasher 8-Cock Derby championship at the Big Dome last June.

Paul Mortel of MBLA Court in Marikina City, said the FEU Tamaraws, the 66th UAAP champion team, "should not forget that its namesake, the tamaraws of the island of Mindoro, is on the verge of extinction." He noted that from a high of 10,000 way back at the turn of the 20th century (1901), its number has dwindled to a dangerously low level of only 187 (as of 2001) and it could be lesser by now because of continued poaching/hunting of the poor creature, considered to be a "national treasure."

"I sincerely hope," he wrote, "that officials of FEU, its basketball team, its students and, of course, the whole nation can do something to save the tamaraws from extinction and not suffer the fate of the dodo bird of Mauritius and the dinosaurs which we can only see in pictures."



SACKED: Todd Heap (center) of the Baltimore Ravens hauls in a second quarter reception and is upended by Peter Simon (left) and Andre Dyson of the Tennessee Titans during their AFC Wild-Card playoff game in Baltimore, Maryland, Saturday. The Titans won, 20-17. In Charlotte, North Carolina, the Panthers downed the Dallas Cowboys, 29-10. AFP

₱1.2-M carryover amount at stake in Santa Ana WTA

WITH P1.2 million to be added in tomorrow's Winner-Take-All pool, bettors are expected to troop to Santa Ana Park and Off-Track Betting (OTB) stations in Metro Manila and nearby provinces to stake their claim to the cash bonanza.

Philippine Racing Club Inc. (PRCI) jumpstarts its 2004 racing calendar with a six-day race schedule starting tomorrow through Sunday after a two-week break following its successful racing calendar in 2003.

Living up to its stature as the country's foremost racing club, PRCI ended 2003 with total sales of more than P3.9 billion, outpacing Manila Jockey Club Inc. (MJCI) by more than P300 million. This is the fifth year in a row that PRCI has outdone MJCI in betting sales.

A sum of P1,209,928 from the WTA pool of its record-setting Dec. 21 card will be added in tomorrow's WTA betting pool. No winner emerged from the second set of the WTA (Races 9-15) on that day.

Tomorrow's WTA event will include races 3-9. Betting windows close before the start of the third race at 7:20 p.m.

Santa Ana Park will be hosting four days of night races from Jan. 6-9 with nine races each, and a full card of 13 races each for Saturday and Sunday. Starting time for the weekday races is 6 p.m. A 1 p.m. start will be implemented for its weekend cards.

Adiong Cup listing ends today

TODAY is the last day of registration for the first Gov. Mamintal Adiong Cup National Open Tennis Championships slated Jan. 6-12 at the MSU Tennis Center in Marawi City.

Players may call Loida Mallare at the Philta (525-6434), Melchor Sabandon (0919-4042138) and Henry Daut (0920-5630431).

SEAG campaigners Johnny Arcilla, Jospeh Victorino, Adelo Abadia and Rolando Ruel are vying in the P200,000 netfest.

MMFF awards night: And the winners are... not present

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE MAJOR winners in Saturday night's 29th Metro Manila Film Festival "Gabi ng Parangal" were either out of the country or simply refused to go up the stage to accept their awards.

"Mano Po 2" producer and Regal Films matriarch Lily Monteverde reportedly left the awards venue, the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City, after the best screenplay trophy was awarded to Roy Iglesias for "Filipinas," a Viva Films production.

Monteverde was no longer around when her award was announced: second best picture and P500,000 in cash for "Mano Po 2."

Viva Films' Vic del Rosario was there for "Filipinas," but he did not go up the stage to accept the third best picture award and the P250,000 cash prize.

"Homecoming" director Gil Portes was spending the holidays with his family in New York and was not able to accept the "most gender sensitive film award" and a cash prize of P500,000 given by the Quezon City government.

According to a statement from the office of Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte Jr., the award, a first in local movies, is "given to the film that best portrays relevant and realistic issues related to gender concerns such as women's status and contributions in relation to men, community, society and nation-building; depiction of traditional biases which challenge the roles of men and women."

Best supporting actress winner Hilda Koronel ("Crying Ladies") was ill on Saturday night, while best actor Eric Quizon ("Crying Ladies") was in the United States visiting his mother, Pamela "Baby" Smith, according to their costar, Angel Aquino.

"Crying Ladies" lead star Sharon Cuneta was spending the holidays in Thailand with her husband, Sen. "Kiko" Pangilinan, and their daughter, Frankie, Aquino added.

"We nevertheless stayed up until four in the morning to celebrate our victory," Angel told Inquirer Entertainment on Monday. "We ate a lot of ice cream."

Angel said the movie's producer, Unitel-Basfilm Picture, was "more hoping than expecting" to win the best picture award.

"It came as a surprise to us," she said. "But the award was most welcome. We're very proud of the movie."

Tony Gloria, who was also the producer of the critically acclaimed "American Adobo," produced "Crying Ladies." He thanked Cuneta for "taking the challenge in doing something different" and first-time movie director Mark Meily for writing "a very refreshing story."

"Crying Ladies" is based on Meily's Palanca award-winning screenplay "Bayad Luha." Meily won the best director award.

"Homecoming" lead actress Alessandra de Rossi accepted Portes' award in his behalf. "I'd like to thank Gabriela, the group that gave us the award," Portes said in a text message to Inquirer Entertainment.

Portes said he had a terrible attack of gout when he arrived at the JFK airport in New York on Christmas Eve. "I had to be wheeled out of the airport," he said. "After the midnight Mass, bedridden *na ako*."

Assunta de Rossi was around in a show of support for her sister Alessandra, a best actress nominee for "Homecoming." Alessandra had taken her mother's side in last year's word war with Assunta and the latter's fiancé, Negros Occidental Rep. Jules Ledesma. The sisters have reconciled but Alessandra and Ledesma, now her brother-in-law, have remained estranged.

Cherrie Gil, Dina Bonnevie and comedian Bayani Agbayani hosted the "Gabi ng Parangal." Bayani kept the audience in stitches throughout the three-hour show.

Images on our TV screens

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST month, GMA-7's two show biz talk-variety shows, "Startalk" and "S-Files," came up with a novel "double deal" that boosted their appeal to viewers.

One Saturday, the "Startalk" hosts, **Rosanna Roces**, **Butch Francisco** and **Lolit Solis**, had "S-Files'" **Janice de Belen**, **Paolo Bediones**, **Richard Gomez** and **Joey Marquez** as guest hosts. Some popular "S-Files" portions were also included to spice up the Saturday show.

Then, the following day, it was the turn of "S-Files" to guest the "Startalk" hosts and include some of their best-rating features.

This GMA-7 gambit worked because, on both days, the shows benefited from the combined drawing power of both sets of hosts. It was double the trouble for the production people, but it was also double the fun for viewers last weekend. Maybe GMA should do this on a more regular basis?

Other boob-tube images weren't so upbeat, however. A remote coverage of the deadly landslide in Leyte turned viewers off because the TV camera ogled too intrusively at dead bodies and wailing survivors.

What was a news event of tragic proportions became a shallow, hysterical melodrama as TV cameramen zoomed in on anguished faces, violating the bereaved relatives' right to privacy.

The heads of our TV networks' news and public affairs departments should work harder at training their staff members to do professional, objective work, and never to confuse the news with melodrama.

It's instructive to compare some of our TV people's intrusive coverages with the disciplined handling on international channels of say, the recent earthquake in Iran.

Local coverages poke cameras and microphones into people's faces, hoping for an emotional outburst or heartbreaking sound bite, while their foreign counterparts discreetly cover a disaster from a distance, and refrain from goading survivors into screaming and flailing displays of over-the-top emotion.

For Ali Sotto

ON TV a few days ago, our heart went out to **Ali Sotto** as she mourned the death of her son, **Miko**. Ali was painfully candid when she shared that she needed prayers because her faith was shaken by her beloved son's accidental death, and she asked for help to try to understand or a least come to terms with the tragedy that has befallen her family.

Every death spells terrible loss, but the accidental death of youths at the prime of their lives is particularly painful and confounding. We can do only a little to assuage Ali's grief and pain, but since she's a good friend, we have to try:

Ali, we have also had to contend with the death of beloved young people in our family—our sister **Margie** in her early 20s, and our beloved brother in his 30s. We know that nothing can be as deep and painful as a mother's grief, but perhaps the lessons we've learned as a bereaved sibling twice over can be of at least some help:

When our sister died, it was like the light has been snuffed out in our family's life. She was an achiever with so many plans for the future, and a really wonderful person, so we didn't know what to do without her.

It took us many months to even try to sort out the deep loss we felt, and to understand why she had been so abruptly and inexplicably taken away from us.

Caring friends tried to articulate some "reasons" to assuage our grief: "The good die young because God wants them close to His bosom." "Our loved ones are only lent to us for some years, but they really belong to God." We thanked our well-meaning friends, but continued to grieve, and wonder.

When our brother **Lito**, a kind and exceptional person, similarly passed away, leaving us completely without a sibling, our confusion was compounded. Why two deaths in just one family? Wasn't this going from incomprehensibility to cruelty? To add to the shared pain, our brother left young children who had to be soothed and helped.

The twin trials were severe, but what saw us through were our faith and the strength we got from our relatives and friends, and from our siblings' own friends. We therefore suggest, Ali, that you surround yourself with these and other support systems. For our parr. our spirits were especially boosted when an aged aunt of ours traveled a great distance to share our grief.

GOODBYE, MIKO. Ali Sotto must find strength in faith

We were also greatly heartened to see so many non-relatives mourning for our siblings, and sharing how Margie and Lito had touched their lives. This helped assure us that their existence, albeit much too brief, had made a difference.

Ali, we're sure many people will also express to you their love and appreciation for Miko, and we hope you will derive comfort in the meaning of your son's young life, as it unfolds from those heartfelt testimonials.

Ultimately, however, you and your loved ones must find the greatest strength and comfort in your faith in God. We know that you have shared that your faith has been shaken, but you must remain steadfast in your trust in God's love, despite everything. The "reasons" for tragedy will become clear to us in the hereafter.

For now, however, love, faith and trust must suffice. And, with God's help, they will.

A final insight: Instead of continually mourning our dead, let us do the best we can for the loved ones they have left behind. That's the finest way for us to show our love—in living action—for our dear departed!

Joemari's music flies 30,000 feet high

MUSIC MAN Chan records "Love..." as PAL's Garcia (background) listens.

SINGER and songwriter Jose Mari Chan wrote the song "Love at 30,000 feet" in 1974. Its brisk, catchy and upbeat melody was adopted as a Philippine Airlines jingle in 1978.

"It was an honor that the national airline took such an interest in my work," recalls Chan. "It helped establish the song. I had a feeling it would be used for many years."

He was right. Three decades after he wrote the song, Chan revisits his composition, gives it a new sound and updates the lyrics to suit PAL's new image.

The song had been performed by the Chicago Symphony Center following PAL's inaugural flight to the US Midwest City in 1985. Conducting the orchestra was then PAL chair Roman Cruz Jr., who had been responsible for transforming the Chan ditty into the PAL jingle.

With its new lyrics, the jingle hopes to target its market straight in the heart. "*We'll pamper you and let you fly the way you should/ Closer to heaven, we're 30,000 feet up in the sky/ Here among the stars let all worries fly.*"

Renowned musical director Alan Smallwood, who arranged some of Chan's best-loved songs, including "Beautiful Girl" and "Constant Change," also reworked Ryan Cayabyab's original score of the song.

"(It's) a pleasure to listen to, in the aircraft, the concert hall or wherever one may be," says Jess Garcia, PAL's assistant vice president for advertising, who oversaw the project.

The new arrangement is the boarding music on all PAL flights.

"The music sets the mood for the journey," explains Garcia. "It's one of the signature elements of PAL's service."

Chan, who has accumulated 37 platinum awards in four decades as a recording artist, singles out "Love at 30,000 Feet" as a personal favorite.

"It's one of my few fast songs," he says.

Pop music has often reflected a fascination with flight, like "Up, Up and Away" by pop-soul group Fifth Dimension and the instrumental "Love's Theme" by soul legend Barry White and his Love Unlimited Orchestra. Both were used as advertising jingles by other airlines.

"Love at 30,000 Feet" is PAL's response to this advertising concept.

So how does Chan, a frequent PAL flyer, feel whenever he hears his song played on board?

"Extremely proud," is his response.

"A composition is like your offspring," he explains. "When your child goes on to become a successful person, you feel proud. Each time I hear 'Love at 30,000 Feet' played, I feel so happy because my child has made it." *Rene C. Soliman*

Ali Sotto's husband is an American citizen, not Pakistani

OMAR Bsaies, husband of actress and radio talent Ali Bsaies, mother of the late young star Miko Sotto, is not a Pakistani as earlier reported but an American citizen with Tunisian origin.

Bsaies says he works with the United States Embassy and has been stationed in Manila since September, not in Mexico City as earlier reports said.

"I was there, too," he said, referring to Jan. 2 ceremony when Ali eulogized her son Miko at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City.

Reports of Miko's funeral did not mention Bsaies' name, said Ali's husband.

Miko, Ali's son by former husband Maru Sotto, fell to his death from his 9th floor condominium unit in Mandaluyong City last Dec. 29.

Queen honors Clapton

LONDON—Guitar legend Eric Clapton becomes the latest British rock legend to win high honors from Queen Elizabeth in this year's annual New Year's honor list.

The Grammy-winning rocker, whose hits include "Tears in Heaven," becomes a Commander of the British Empire, one of Britain's highest honors, putting him just a rung below the full-blown knighthoods enjoyed by Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Elton John and Sir Mick Jagger.

Ray Davies, frontman for the Sixties band the Kinks, also wins a CBE.

This year's honors list was dominated by Britain's world champion rugby team, with every member winning an award and Coach Clive Woodward becoming Sir Clive.

Other awards for entertainment figures include a CBE for film director Stephen Daldry, whose movie "The Hours" won an Oscar for star Nicole Kidman, and a DBE, otherwise known as a Dame, for veteran actress Joan Plowright.

Daldry also directed "Billy Eliott." *Reuters*

Loretta Marquez, a saint to her followers

SHOW TIME

WHEN Star '66 and movie actress Loretta Marquez—Flordeliza King in real life—died in 1996, not everyone knew she left behind a Catholic religious organization she herself had built to honor and venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. That group, Templo ng Katotohanan, whose members are mostly from Malabon City and other parts of Metro Manila, is proud of its origin as a cradle of Loretta's legacy as a visionary and faith healer.

Even when Loretta was still alive, her followers were treating her like a holy woman. She was a contemporary of Ricky Belmonte, Rosemarie Sonora, Pepito Rodriguez, Blanca Gomez, Bert Leroy, Jr., Gina Pareño, Dindo Fernando, Ramil Rodriguez and Shirley Moreno at Sampaguita Pictures.

"Barangay Showbiz," hosted by award-winning journalist Boy Villasanta, presents memories of Loretta and her religious life today, 3-3:30 p.m. on UNTV UHF Channel 37.

LORETTA MARQUEZ

SENTIMENTAL LADY also keeps in her bag a rose rosary, scent from FPJ, key chain from China, a camera from a friend and a Swatch from Rowell Santiago.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

WHITE LADY

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jim Gulao Punzalan

"THERE will always be someone who will pull you down," says young actress Judy Ann Santos. "It's how you handle criticisms that matters."

Judy Ann—or Juday—says she improved as an actress when she stopped worrying about what other people said about her.

"I used to get affected by what people say, until I realized that it's not helping me as an actress," says Juday, one of the stars of the ABS-CBN weeknight soap, "Basta's Kasama Kita." "It's like *hindi na ako mabuhay nang maayos.*"

She was recently the subject of a nasty rumor linking her to "BKK" co-star Robin Padilla. The rumor said Judy Ann had caused the breakup of the 17-year marriage of Robin and Liezl Sycangco, with whom the actor has four kids.

Judy Ann quickly denied the rumor, saying she would never be cause a family like Robin's to fall apart.

"I'm happy whenever I see a family that is intact because I've never had a complete family," Judy Ann tells INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview at her restaurant, Café Carabana, in Quezon City.

In "Basta't Kasama Kita," she plays Princess Gonzalez, a young law graduate, while Robin is Ambet Catindig, a policeman.

She and her TV character are alike in many ways, but differ in their clothing preference, says the actress. "Princess is sophisticated," she says. "She's always in style, while I usually wear a simple white shirt, jeans and sneakers."

To prepare for the role, Judy Ann has had to lose weight and buy a lot of "stylish" clothes. She says Princess is fond of wearing tight-fighting tops, or clothes that Judy Ann herself finds not too comfortable to wear.

"I have to feel confident with what I'm wearing so I can act well," she says. "It's really an effort on my part to hide all these bulges. (laughs)."

Judy Ann tapes for "Basta't Kasama Kita" three times a week. Until last month, she was also busy promoting "Mano Po 2," Regal Films' entry in the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival.

"I really don't have time to fix my room and the stuff inside my closet right now," the actress says. "My clothes are in boxes and most of the boxes are stashed under my bed."

Which is why, she explains, this Out of the Closet interview is taking place in her Cafe Carabana in Quezon City, where she has brought some items from her closets at home for the pictorial. But she promises to let INQUIRER Entertainment into her room "as soon as I have a walk-in closet built in there."

"I had my room painted in blue and tangerine," she shares. "I have lots of stuffed toys there, as well as gift items I bought abroad."

Shirts. I bought this white polo during my four-day vacation in Phuket, Thailand, last year. *Ang lambot ng tela. Presko.* If I'm not in the mood to dress up, I wear this with tattered jeans. Sometimes, I pair this with a bohemian skirt.

"I wore this long-sleeved shirt in the movie, 'Paano ang Puso Ko' with Wowie (de Guzman) and (the late) Rico (Yan). I played the role of a farmer. The wardrobe mistress bought this from the *palengke. Hiningi ko.* I liked the fabric because it is so soft. It has been four years since we did the movie but I still use this shirt.

"This white shirt is really memorable. It's extra-small. It reminds me of how thin I was when I first wore it. This is my gauge. If I can wear it again, it means I've reached my ideal weight."

Socks. I bought these Hello Kitty socks when I was in Japan two years ago. The trip was for a series of shows with Smokey Manoloto. I'm not a collector of Hello Kitty items but when I saw them, I immediately liked them. I bring them wherever I go, I don't know why. These are my good night socks. I sleep better when I wear them."

'I have to feel confident with what I wear so I can act well'

WHY WHITE? "I don't know," says the star of her liking for things white.

Bags. "Paul Cabral gave this bag to me for my birthday. This is one of my favorite bags. I like it so much that I hardly use it. I don't want it washed because I'm scared its colors might fade.

"My best friend gave me this Armani bag. You can always find this in my van. It contains white socks, shirts or *lampin* (cloth diaper). *Basta puti lang ang nakalagay diyan.* I really like white, I don't know why.

"My friend Jane and I bought our Gap bags in the States last March. I was with the Padilla brothers—Rustom, Robin, Rommel—during that trip. I like it because it has many pockets and is very convenient."

Cloth diapers. "I never leave home without them. They have my initials. I like them because they're soft and absorbent. I use a *lampin* instead of tissue or face towel to wipe anything off my face or skin. It's also my security blanket. I don't feel comfortable without my *lampin.*"

Rubber shoes. "This pair of pink Converse is one of my favorites. I brought it when I went to the United States two weeks ago (she went to the US last Nov. 19 to perform in a series of shows in Las Vegas, California and Chicago with Aiza Seguerra, Nikki Valdez, Bayani Agbayani and John Lapuz). This is the only pair of shoes that I wore during my entire nine-day stay.

"My Nike 'muddy' shoes are very special to me. I bought them on my first trip to Las Vegas. My feet were hurting after wearing nothing but high-heeled sandals. To give my feet some rest, I bought these in Nike Town. I've not washed them since. Obvious *ba*?"

Perfume. "*Tatay* Ron (Fernando Poe Jr.) gave this bottle of Calming Waters from Bath and Body Wash while we were filming 'Isusumbong Kita sa Tatay Ko.' This and a backpack were his birthday gifts to me. I don't want to use the scent. I want to preserve it because *Tatay* Ron gave it to me. I've had this for five years now.

"I'm using an Armani perfume now. I like it because I can use it day or night."

Stuffed toys. "I have a 5-year-old frog that I always bring with me wherever I go. I also have a puppy that I never take out of the car.

"Mylene Dizon gave me an Elmo when we were still doing 'Gimik' together.

"Rico and I have a baby doll that was given to us by a fan from the States. The doll even has a birth certificate."

Sleepwear. "I wear only white shirts and white pajamas to bed. I didn't bring my Gap pajamas (for the pictorial) because I just used them last night. I bought them in the States. *Gasgas na gasgas na sa akin.*

"I sleep soundly only when I wear white. I'm very particular about that. I want white shirt, white pajamas, white bed sheets and white pillowcases. I can sleep for more than six hours if everything is in white, even if the place is noisy."

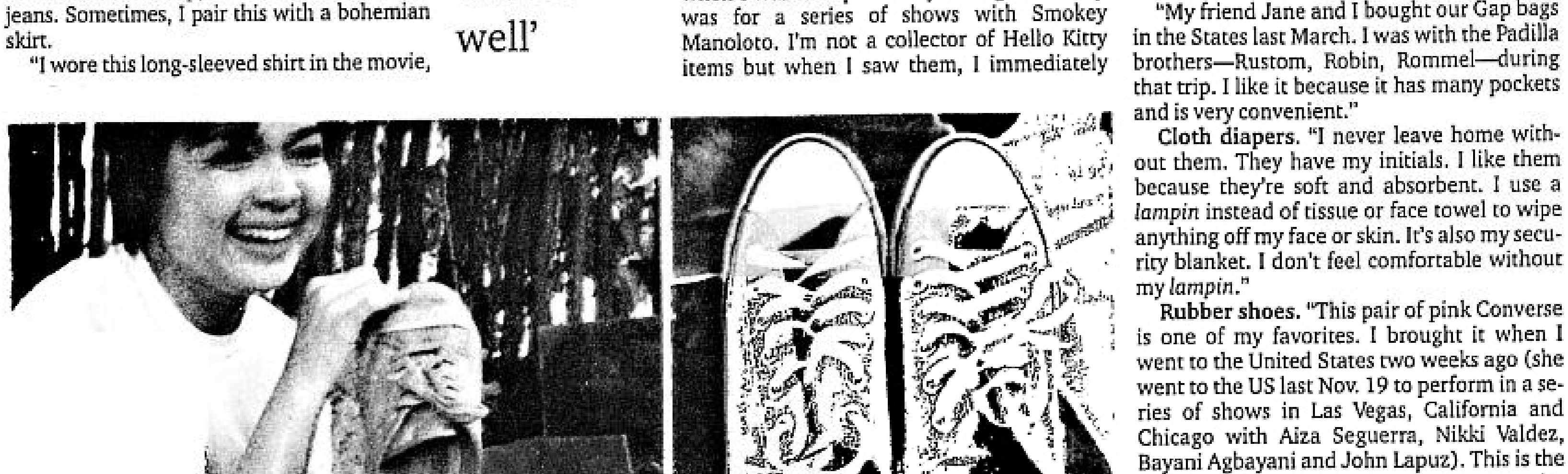
Necklace. "*Ate* Sharon (Cuneta) gave this silver necklace to me when we were promoting 'Magkapatid' two years ago. She gave this to me when we made an appearance on 'S-Files.' I didn't expect to receive something like this from her so I cried. The show required us to bring a gift. I gave her a pencil case filled with pens and pencils. She loves to write. That was the only thing I could think of giving her. She has everything already.

"I first wore this (necklace) when I appeared on her show."

Key chain. "I bought this in China last November when we shot some scenes for 'Mano Po 2' there. I gave most of the cast members—Carmina (Villaroel), Jay (Manalo), Lorna (Tolentino) and *Ate* Zsa Zsa (Padilla)—as well as our PM. I also gave some to my close friends. The old woman who sold me this said it symbolizes luck. I bought around 20."

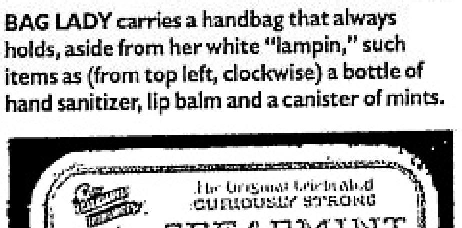
Camera. "This was given to me by a friend from San Diego during my last trip. I always make sure I have a camera inside my bag. I take pictures of all sorts of things, on all occasions. You'll never know when you're going to bump into a friend you have not seen for a long time. Too bad I was not able to bring my scrapbook. I love doodling. That's my therapy. Cooking and working on my scrapbook really relaxes me."

Earrings. "I never take these earrings off. This is the most expensive pair I've ever bought. I paid for this for one whole year. *Halos iniyakan ko ito.* I was only 20 years old then. *Kapag nawala, ay naku, ikamamatay ko!*"



TIRED FEET get comfort from the muddy pair (above) that has not been washed since it was bought, unlike the pink pair that is only a couple of months old.

BAG LADY carries a handbag that always holds, aside from her white "lampin," such items as (from top left, clockwise) a bottle of hand sanitizer, lip balm and a canister of mints.



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SM CITY NORTH EDSA

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2	BRIDAL SHOWER
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	GAGAMBOY
8	FILIPINAS

SM CITY CEBU

1	CRYING LADIES
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	GAGAMBOY
4	FILIPINAS
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	MANO PO 2
7	MALIKMATA
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY BACOOR

1	FILIPINAS
2	MANO PO 2
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	GAGAMBOY
7	MALIKMATA
8	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY PAMPANGA

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	FILIPINAS

SM BICUTAN

1	GAGAMBOY
2	MALIKMATA
3	MANO PO 2
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	GAGAMBOY

SM STA. MESA

1	MANO PO 2
2	MALIKMATA
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	FANTASTIC MAN
6	GAGAMBOY
7	CRYING LADIES
8	BRIDAL SHOWER
9	GAGAMBOY
10	FILIPINAS

SM SOUTHMALL

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FILIPINAS
3	CRYING LADIES
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	GAGAMBOY
6	BNDAL SHOWER
7	MALIKMATA
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	GAGAMBOY
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	GAGAMBOY
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MANO PO 2
8	CRYING LADIES
9	GAGAMBOY
10	MALIKMAFA
11	BRIDAL SHOWER
12	FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO

1	MANO PO 2
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY LUCENA

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	MANO PO 2
4	GAGAMBOY

SM MEGAMALL

1	MANO PO 2 RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6346509
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	GAGAMBOY
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	GAGAMBOY
12	FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	BRIDAL SHOWER

SM CITY ILOILO

1	MALIKMATA
2	RESERVED
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	RESERVED
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	MANO PO 2
4	GAGAMBOY
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	FILIPINAS
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	CRYING LADIES
11	GAGAMBOY
12	MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO

1	MANO PO 2
2	MALIKMATA
3	CRYING LADIES
4	GAGAMBOY

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1	**CRYING LADIES** 12:20 FS/12:50 MF/3:15/5:40/8:05/10:00 LFS/10:35 LMF/12:30 END
2	**BRIDAL SHOWER** 11:30 FS/12:00 MF/2:40/5:20/8:00/10:15 LFS/10:40 LMF/12:55 END

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2 MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	5 BRIDAL SHOWER 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50	6 GAGAMBOY 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
7 HOMECOMING 12:20, 2:30, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00	9 FILIPINAS 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
8 MALIKMATA 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30	10 CRYING LADIES 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

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GAGAMBOY	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
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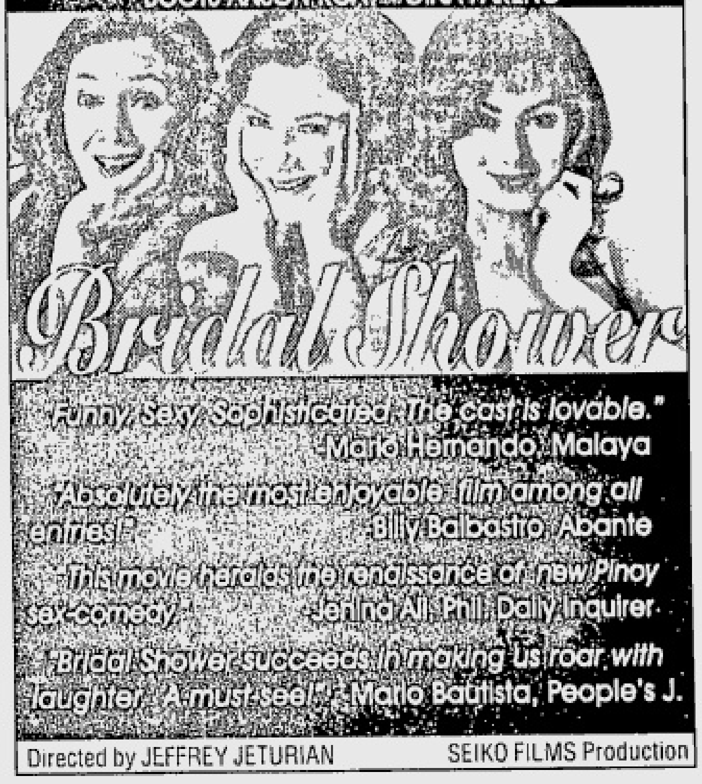

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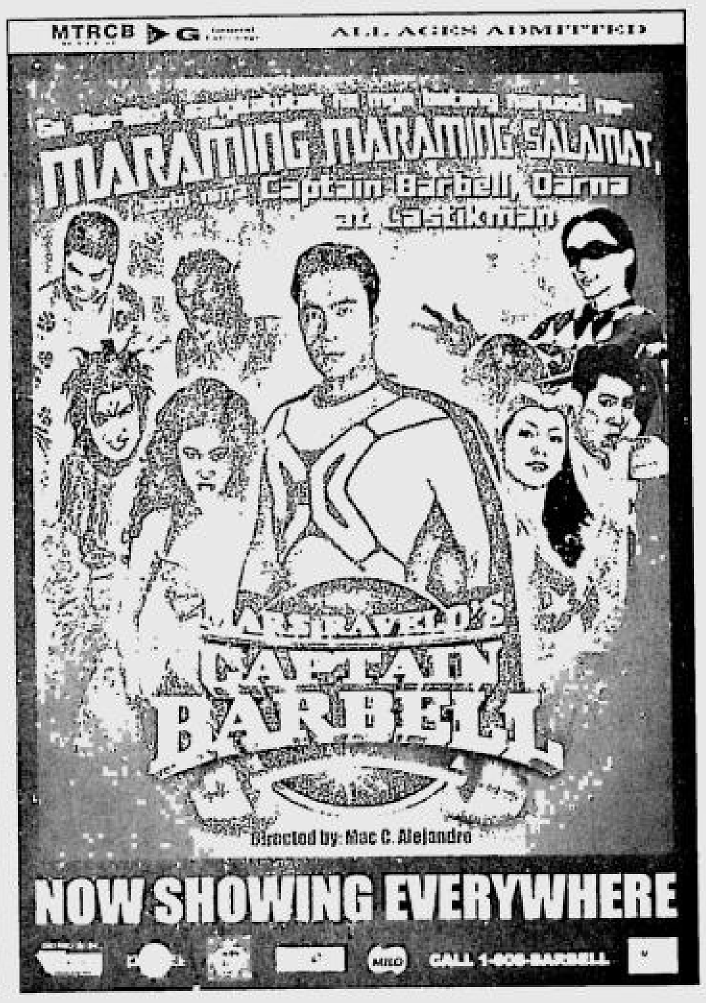
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Jolie buys cows for Cambodian farmers

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia—Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie is funding a program to donate cows to poverty-stricken Cambodian farmers, an associate said last week.

The plan is part of Jolie's nature conservation project in the country. Under the program, 300 families will get one cow each to help them earn money, hopefully dissuading them from logging and hunting wildlife for their living, said Mounh Sarath, director of the Cambodian Vision in Development project.

Jolie is giving the organization US$1.5 million for its environmental protection efforts in remote parts in northwestern Cambodia.

The project aims to protect about 60,000 hectares (148,200 acres) of forest in the Samlaut and Pailin areas, both former strongholds of the murderous Khmer Rouge regime that ruled Cambodia in 1975-79.

Jolie, 28, is having a house built in Cambodia. She fell in love with the country when part of her film "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" was shot at its famed Angkor temple complex.

The 300 cows will cost a total of US$36,000, Mounh Sarath said, adding that each family can keep the cow and its first calf.

"Whenever the second calf is born, they will give it to our organization to pass over to another family," he said.

Mounh Sarath said offices, guesthouses and a vocational training center are being built.

In 2002, Jolie adopted a Cambodian boy through an agency that was later found to have faked documents for Cambodian kids. *AP*

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ROBEN	BOLD STAR
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TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY : LEGEND OF CROCODILE
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ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
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CORONET A	BRIDAL SHOWER
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
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STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
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CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
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CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
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CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
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5 GOLD (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
6 GOLD (SDDS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 GOLD (DOLBY) MANO PO-2
8 [illegible] CRYING LADIES
9 [illegible] BRIDAL SHOWER
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3 CAPT. BARBEL
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5

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5 MANO PO-2

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4 [illegible] GAGAMBOY

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4 MANO PO-2

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2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY

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Lorna T wants another baby

By Nini Valera

ACTRESS Lorna Tolentino is wishing for another baby with husband Rudy Fernandez.

Lorna T admitted to INQUIRER Entertainment that they had been trying for a long time to have another child.

"But it's not happening," said the actress, who plays the *bida-contravida* role of Belinda, the third wife, in Regal Film's "Mano Po 2," part of the Metro Manila Film Festival 2003. "Nothing. We don't use, pills or (do it) by rhythm method. But *wala talaga*."

She admitted she was disappointed a few times after her period was delayed. "But then, it was just late," she said. "So there's the frustration. So we are no longer trying as hard. If (God) gives us another child, then we'll have another child."

Lorna and Rudy have two sons, Rafael, 19, and Ren, 17. Rudy also has a love child, Mark Anthony, by former live-in partner Alma Moreno.

Appreciating seniors

At 41, Lorna is racing against time to have another child. It's also an age when actresses begin to wane in popularity. But not Lorna, who's still in demand for lead roles.

"Because I don't look my age," she laughed.

"Time will come when I'll be doing roles that are less than my requirements, but I'll accept that," she said. "I think, however, that we're starting to appreciate our senior actresses. We now have Gloria Romero and Susan Roces doing meaty roles."

Lorna herself plays the most coveted role in Erik Matti's "Mano Po 2." The part of the third wife was first offered to Kris Aquino, who declined the role and went on to play the first wife.

Dina Bonnevie was also considered for the role, and so was Eula Valdez. The issue sizzled for a while, but ended with the announcement that Lorna got the part and that Dina and her manager would sue the producer, Lily Monteverde.

BAD WHEN MAD. "When I'm good, I'm very, very good," says Lorna T. "When I'm bad, I'm very, very bad."

Was the role worth fighting for?

"Actually, to be part of the movie was already worth it," said Lorna evasively.

Good role for '*kumare*'

Was the role a letdown?

"*Hindi naman*," she said. "You mean because of the controversies? The controversies happened because Mother Lily could not decide who to choose, Dina or me."

Lorna also revealed that she has not yet talked to Dina, "my *kumare*," since the third-wife issue started.

"I haven't seen Dina," she added. "*Pero, napalitan naman siya ng maganda ring* role, *sa* 'Bridal Shower' (another film fest entry)."

After three decades in the movie business, Lorna has apparently taken intrigues and controversies in stride. She made her first movie at age 9, as the young Susan Roces in "Divina Gracia," a dual role.

"This makes me an FPJ baby," said Lorna, referring to presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr., who produced "Divina Gracia."

"I wouldn't be here if not for him," Lorna stressed.

Which is why she would support the actor's presidential bid "all the way."

Resting from politics

Asked if FPJ would be good for the country, Lorna, without missing a beat, replied: "Why not? That is the same question that could be asked about the other candidates. Will they do the country good? For me, it's an equal chance."

But Rudy's political ambition might take a back seat in the 2004 elections. After losing his mayoralty bid in Quezon City in the last elections, Rudy opted to stay out of politics.

"People have been talking to him to run for vice mayor of Quezon City, but he has turned down the offers so far," Lorna confided. "We felt that we have to give politics a rest because of what happened before. His loss is still painful to us. We lost in all aspects—emotional, financial. We're only recovering now."

Good and bad

Known for being an even tempered person, Lorna, however, revealed her dark side.

"When I'm good, I'm very, very good," she said. "When I'm bad, I'm very, very bad. I'm bad when I get mad. I get mad when I'm abused by other people, by chances, by situations.

"I used to be a jealous woman. Not anymore. I think I'm already too old to feel that way."

She also admitted that her marriage had been on the rocks twice—in 1986 and again in 1990.

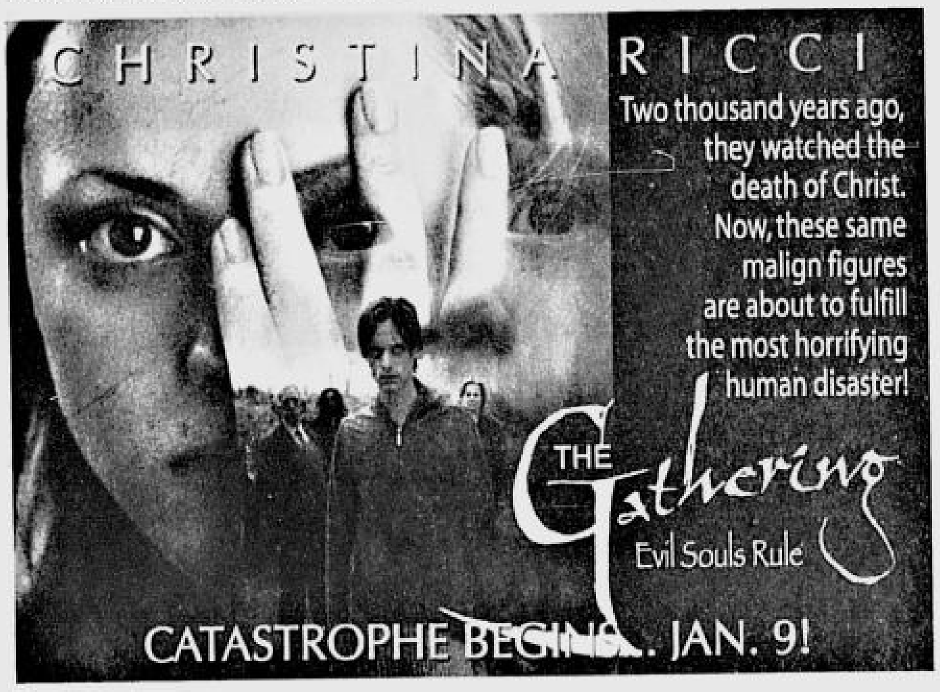
"It was saved by God's will," she said. "And by the coup," she added, jokingly, referring to People Power in '86.

In her just-concluded soap, "Kay Tagal Kitang Hinintay," Lorna played a dual character. One was a goody-two-shoes, and the other a bitch from hell.

"But it turned out I enjoyed doing the bad part better than the good one," Lorna laughed. "Even in my new soap (which still has to air), I have a *bida-contravida* part. And I'm having fun with it."

Life has been good to her, she is the first to admit. But it would be better if she could have another child.

"How I wish," she sighed.



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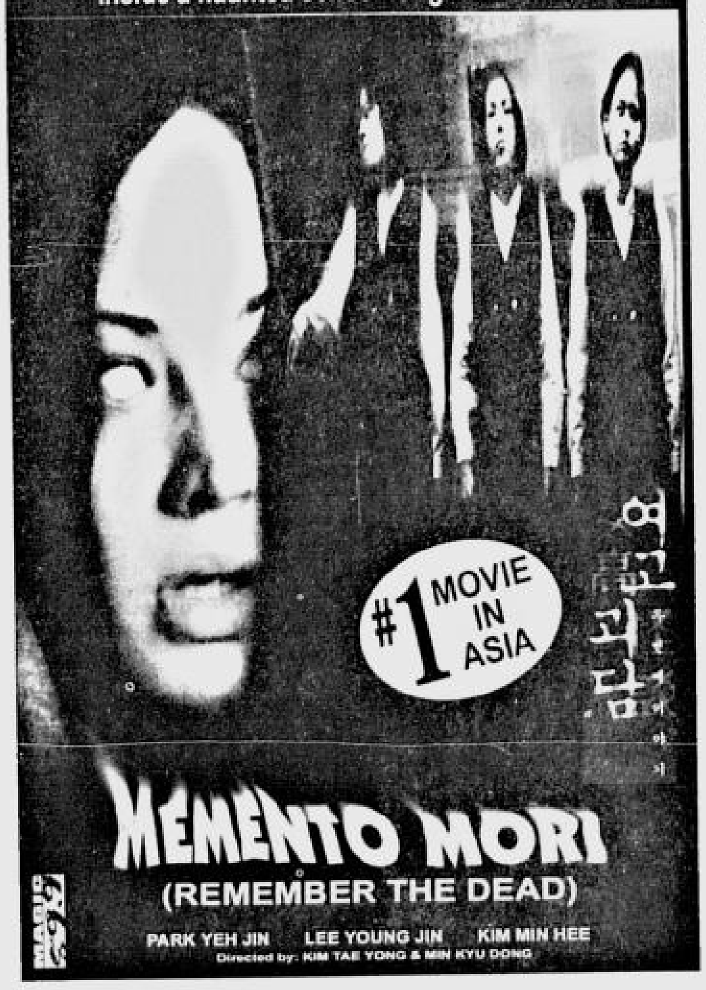

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Moody's seen downgrading RP rating

By Clarissa S. Batino

MOODY'S Investors Service is poised to downgrade the Philippines' sovereign credit rating anytime soon due to the prevailing political uncertainties and the weakness of the fiscal sector, according to an official of the rating agency.

"There is a big chance that we will downgrade the (Philippines' sovereign credit) rating," said Moody's vice president and senior credit officer Thomas Byrne in an interview.

Moody's conducted a review on the Philippines' rating in mid December. Given the results of the review the inclination now is to downgrade the rating, Byrne said. He said the decision would be out within the month.

The rating firm warned in November that it might have to cut its rating on the Philippines due to increasing political risks. The government's achievement to keep the 2003 budget deficit below the P202-billion ceiling seemed to have failed to impress Moody's.

"It is good that the government met last year's (budget deficit) target but to begin with, the target was already high, almost double of what it should be. To us, it was not a great accomplishment," said Byrne.

He pointed out that the original target was to bring down the fiscal gap to below P130 billion by 2003 and to zero by 2006. But with the ballooning of the budget gap in 2002, the government admitted that attaining a fiscal balance would not be possible until 2009.

In September, Moody's revised a stable outlook to negative on the country's foreign currency borrowings. Local currency debt was also given a negative rating in January last year.

Moody's gave the Philippines a rating of 'Ba1' for foreign currency-denominated bonds and 'Baa3' for local borrowings.

Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings had downgraded their ratings on the country to BB from BB+ in the first half of 2003.

Byrne said that the prevailing political uncertainties in the country that increased risks had kept crucial foreign direct investments from coming in.

MOODY'S/ B2

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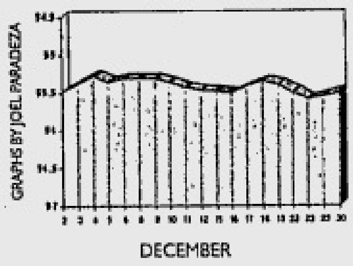


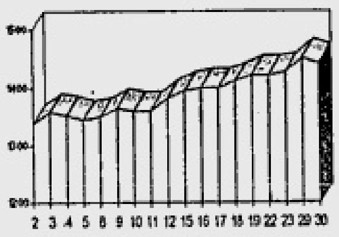
₱ 55.50 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

¥ 106.96 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

GOLD: $413.80-414.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 30, 2003

Sluggish trading seen

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

TRADERS expect sluggish trading in the stock market this week as investors take stock of their holdings accumulated in 2003.

Regular trading resumes today after the long Christmas holidays which left the local bourse open for only four days over the past two weeks.

The main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index ended 2003 at 1,442.37 points. Despite some profit-taking in the last day of trading, the index managed to post a 42-percent gain for the full year.

BPI Securities said the short-term positions taken during the yearend run-up would soon be reversed, as seen in the large volume of shares that changed hands during the last day of trading in 2003 when the index succumbed to profit-taking.

It said profit-taking would likely continue over the next few days.

SLUGGISH/ B6

BDO-Equitable PCI merger eyed

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ENTRY of retail tycoon Henry Sy into Equitable PCI Bank as its single biggest stockholder may result in a major merger that will dislodge Bank of Philippine Islands as the country's second biggest lender.

Banking sources told the INQUIRER that the Sy group was keen on a Banco de Oro-Equitable PCI Bank merger. Such a move will create a bank with an asset base of P411.95 billion, higher than BPI's P333.99 billion.

A BDO official confirmed that a merger was being considered but added that it was too early to tell if it would be pursued.

"For now, this is just a strategic investment for BDO," the official said.

Last Friday, BDO signed a binding letter of intent to buy the 29-percent stake held by the Social Security System in Equitable PCI Bank for P14 billion.

Under the deal, the Sy group will pay the SSS an effective price of P43.50 per Equitable PCI share, 30 percent than its last trading price of P33.50.

The official said that for a merger to push through, other shareholders of Equitable PCI would have to be convinced on the merits of it

BDO/ B6

Safeguard duty on cement slashed

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has slashed the safeguard duty on imported cement by P5 per bag saying that the high protective shield had jacked up cement prices.

From P20.60 per 40-kilogram bag, the safeguard duty was brought down to P15.60, said Trade and Industry Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal Jr.

The safeguard duty was imposed in June last year in response to the local cement in-

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Neda's yearend briefing - Part 2

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

THE HOLIDAYS gave me some time to go over the graphs of economic data handed out during the year-end briefing of the NEDA. The graphs prove what I have been saying all along, that economists deal in a branch of mathematics I am not familiar with.

Let me focus on the very first graph presented by Secretary Neri, as follows:

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE
(Growth rates, in percent)
20022003
Q3 Q1Q2Q3 1st-3rd Qtr
GDP3.8 4.54.04.4 4.3

Since there were no explanatory footnotes, I asked Secretary Neri what the figures meant. He said, "They are value added".

In other words, at the end of the third quarter 2002, the economy stood at 103.8 per cent of where it was at the end of the previous quarter. Then, in 2003, the economy grew by 4.5 percent in the first quarter, 4.0 in the second, and 4.4 in the third.

Presumably, these percentages were computed with year-end 2002 as the starting point. If so, from year-end 2002, the economy expanded by an astronomical 12.9 percent (the sum of the three quarterly figures) over the first three quarters 2003.

But then, Neda divided 12.9 percent by 3. The resulting 4.3 percent, the last figure to the right of the graph, was presented as the growth for the first three quarters 2003.

Neda cannot distinguish between growth and growth rate. If I start putting up a high rise building on New Year's day, and I finish 4.5 floors in the first quarter, 4 in the second, and 4.4 in the third, I shall have finished a total of 12.9 floors at the end of three quarters.

But my rate of construction is 12.9 divided by 3, or 4.3 floors per quarter. Summing up, the growth of the project is 12.9 over three quarters; the growth rate is 4.3 floors per quarter.

Also, Neda is not accurate in its labeling. The graph's heading says, "Growth rates, in percent". The only growth rate in the graph is 4.3, the last figure on the far right.

Bangko Sentral shares Neda's fuzzy arithmetic. In a news item the other day, Governor Rafael Buenaventura was quoted as saying, "I think our GDP would grow between 4.2 and 4.4 percent in the last quarter and this range would allow us to meet 4.2 percent full-year growth target."

If the GDP would grow at least 4.2 percent in the last quarter 2003 and, as a result, the 4.2 percent full-year target would be met, simple grade school addition and subtraction would show that there was zero growth during the first three quarters.

But the news item also said that the economy exceeded the 3.8 to 4.3 percent growth target and expanded by 4.4 percent in the third quarter. So, the 4.2 percent year-end target that Governor Buenaventura calls the growth for 2003, is actually the growth rate per quarter. Like Neda Secretary Neri, Governor Buenaventura cannot distinguish between growth and growth rate.

Which brings me to the big question: Just what kind of drivel are our economists churning out and foisting on the Filipino people? Why do I get the feeling that economists arrive at the mathematical conclusions by simply flipping a coin. Or, maybe, someone just sticks a wet finger out of the window to find out which way the wind is blowing. Happy New Year!

PLDT expects ₱1-B loss from landline business

By Abigail L. Ho

DOMINANT carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. expects its fixed line business to suffer a net loss of P1 billion in 2003 due to poor subscriber take-up and the weight of P135 billion worth of debt.

"The fixed line business of PLDT is already undergoing tremendous challenges. PLDT's fixed line business is experiencing a lackluster growth in subscribers, a declining market, and lower revenue. We project to register a P1-billion loss for 2003," PLDT vice president for media and communications Menardo Jimenez Jr. said in a statement.

In the first nine months of 2003, PLDT's fixed line business registered a P1.4-billion net loss.

The fixed line business' bottom line was dragged down by the weight of more than P5 billion in provisions, mainly for bad investments in Unilink/Phil. Home Cable Holdings Inc. and satellite telecommunications service providers ACeS Phil. and ACeS International Ltd. as well as receivables from Philcom Corp.

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Canyon Woods	160,000	100,000
Camp John Hay	-	200,000
Capitol Hills	170,000	150,000
Calatagan Golf Club A/B**	70,000/Pls. Call	-
Cebu Country Club	-	1,230,000
Celebrity Sports Club	160,000	155,000
Club Filipino	150,000	-
Eagleridge A/B/C**	300,000/450,000**	-
Eastridge A/B*	-	20,000/30,000*
Evercrest	80,000	-
Fontana D/C*/A**	76,000/143,000*/230,000**	-
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	190,000/220,000*/250,000**	190,000**
Manila Golf Ind/Corp.*	10,000,000/11,500,000*	9,450,000
Manila Polo	-	2,250,000
Manila Yacht Club	550,000	-
Manila Southwoods A/B*	410,000/600,000*	500,000*
Metropolitan Club	100,000	-
Mimosa Golf Ind./Corp.*	150,000	110,000/250,000*
Mt. Malarayat Ind./Corp.*	230,000/700,000*	-
Phil. Columbian	65,000	-
Puerto Azul A/B	100,000/150,000*	-
Quezon City Sports Club A	-	165,000
Rivera Golf A/B*/C**	140,000/150,000*/350,000**	-
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Royale Tagaytay A/C*	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Sherwoods A/B*/C**	70,000/Pls. Call*	-
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	1,300,000/1,650,000*	-
Subic Bay Yacht Club (Corp.)	150,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	140,000	-
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Please be informed that on December 16, 2003, the Regional Trial Court, Branch 34, Calamba City, Laguna, in SEC Case No. 44-2003-C has placed SMC PNEUMATICS PHILIPPINES, INC. (the "Corporation") under RECEIVERSHIP. In accordance with such Order, MR. JUANITO C. FERNANDEZ, the duly appointed Court Receiver, has posted his Bond and assumed Office on December 17, 2003.

To preserve the assets of the Corporation, all customers and debtors are directed to remit their payments to the RECEIVER at his address at 1927 Sandejas Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila.

The public is hereby informed also that all transactions with the Corporation shall be coursed through the RECEIVER. Payment/s not made to the Receiver and transactions entered into with persons other than the Receiver shall not be honored and a violation of the said Order of the Court.

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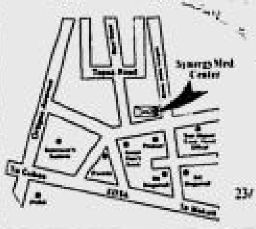

DTI sees investment growth in '04

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry expects the country's economic climate to improve in 2004, thus, encouraging the entry of more foreign and local investments.

DTI Undersecretary and officer-in-charge Adrian Cristobal Jr. said the trade department last year had been working on inviting investors to do business in the country and that quite a number of them were expected to set up operations this year.

Without giving exact figures, Cristobal said investments this year should exceed last year's.

Board of Investments Governor Kim Henares added that the DTI was firming up negotiations with prospective investors, mostly in the information technology and manufacturing sectors, and that the growth momentum in 2003 will likely continue in 2004.

Henares said investments registered with the BOI and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority stood at P54.66 billion as of November 2003. The figure, she said, was 30 percent higher than the investments recorded in 2002.

She added that the significant share of the manufacturing sector in the investments pie, which was 53 percent as of October 2003, was expected to result in higher exports.

Cristobal said the DTI expects exports—and not investments as earlier reported—to grow by as much as 6 percent in 2004, a shade higher than the 5-percent growth projection for 2003.

The expected higher exports hinge on the improvements in the economies of the United States and Japan, which are the Philippines' major export markets.

The DTI said the expected higher investments and exports this year, combined with the projected improvement in the global economy, will help the country achieve a higher gross domestic product growth in 2004.

He clarified that the DTI's projected 4.5- to 5.5-percent GDP growth is for 2004, and not for 2003 as earlier mentioned. For 2003, he said, the DTI concurs with the 4.2- to 5.2-percent projection set by the National Economic and Development Authority.

DTI Undersecretary Thomas Aquino said economic indicators point at a better economy in 2004, but that the country should still be on guard against unexpected events that might hamper business activities.

The government said that without the SARS outbreak and the US- Iraq war that occurred in 2003, the economy could have achieved a better economic growth.

Borrowings pushed Oct. debt stock to ₱3.32T

By Clarissa S. Batino

MASSIVE foreign borrowings in October caused the country's public debt stock to swell to P3.32 trillion as of end-Oct. last year, up by P559 billion or 20.22 percent from P2.765 trillion in the same period the previous year.

This meant that each of the about 82 million Filipinos carry a debt burden of P40,487 on top of any personal obligations.

The government's outstanding debt as of October already exceeded the 2004 target of P3.257 trillion. The 2003 ceiling of P3.058 trillion, on the other hand, was breached as early as July.

October borrowings surged after the national government sold $1.05 billion worth long-term bonds while the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas borrowed $500 million in five-year notes.

Proceeds from both funding exercises would be used to settle maturing obligations.

Month-on-month, the outstanding public debt went up by P124 billion or 3.88 percent from P3.196 trillion in September.

Government obligations accounted for about 55 percent or P2.815 trillion of the Philippines' total debt stock of P5.163 trillion as of end-2002.

In October, foreign debt went up by P295 billion or 22.36 percent to P1.614 trillion ($29.195 billion) from P1.319 trillion ($24.815 billion) the previous year and higher by P75 billion or 4.87 percent from P1.539 trillion ($28.035 billion) as of September.

It did not help that the peso continued to fall in October with the average exchange rate substantially lower at P55.30 against P54.90 in Sept. and P53.15 a year ago.

Domestic obligations also went up by P264 billion or 18.26 percent to P1.71 trillion against P1.446 trillion the previous year and by P53 billion or 3.2 percent from P1.657 trillion as of September.

Contingent debt stood at P698.77 billion or about P150 billion higher from P549.31 billion in October 2002.

The level of contingent debt increased substantially in 2003, indicating the increase in the sovereign guarantees that the government had given out to state agencies as well as the private sector.

The government estimated that the level of consolidated outstanding debt would likely swell to about P7 trillion over the next five years before it could be reduced to a more manageable level.

Only about 11 percent of the debt burden would fall due in a year with the rest to mature in over five years.

The country's rising public debt is one of the reasons why Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings have downgraded their ratings on Philippine borrowings.

Moody's Investors Service also cited the country's unsustainable level of public debt as the main reason behind its negative outlook on the country's credit rating.

Bangko Sentral urged to pay ₱6.4B in back taxes

THE FINANCE department and the Bureau of Internal Revenue are pressing the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to settle P6.4 billion in back taxes to help beef up government revenue in 2003.

The central bank, however, was contesting the amount claimed by the DOF and BIR, although the BSP had already agreed to pay P4 billion as a compromise, sources said.

Payment of the back taxes will help the BIR meet and even exceed its P424.007-billion collection target for 2003 and help reduce the budget deficit figure for the year.

Based on the BIR's computation, the BSP should pay P6.39 billion for unpaid documentary stamp taxes on its reverse repurchase agreements, as well as on dollar transactions from 2001 to the third quarter of 2003.

The amount included P33 million in fringe benefits tax and P4.4 million in withholding taxes in the same period.

The central bank's reluctance to pay the full amount claimed by the DOF and BIR was due to questions on the DST treatment on its transactions. The disagreement between the BIR and the BSP on the issue stemmed from an earlier assessment of the central bank's tax deficiencies.

In December 2002, the BIR pressed the central bank to pay P22.157 billion in tax deficiency for 1999 and 2000.

The central bank argued that the DST was not a tax on the transactions but on documents supporting the deals. The issue has yet to be decided by the courts.

In the 2002 assessment, DSTs accounted for the bulk of the central bank's P22.157-billion tax deficiency for 1999 and 2000.

Unpaid DSTs accounted for P16.188 billion of the total, while gross receipt taxes accounted for P4.123 billion.

"The BIR and DOF had agreed to reduce the amount to P4 billion but they want the BSP to pay the amount to help the BIR meet its collection target," said a government official.

Clarissa S. Batino

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Canlubang	400,000	450,000
Canyonwoods	-	150,000
Capitol Hills	135,000	160,000
Cebu Country Club	1,200,000	Please Call
Celebrity Sports Club	170,000	200,000
Club Filipino	-	175,000
Eagleridge "A"	200,000	270,000
Eagleridge "B"	-	280,000
Eagleridge "C"	-	340,000
Evercrest "A"	-	80,000
Forest Hills "A"	165,000	180,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	230,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	250,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	-	220,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	250,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	Please Call
Manila Golf (Individual)	9,500,000	10,100,000
Manila Polo	Please Call	2,300,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	300,000	400,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	-	550,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	400,000
Metroclub "A"	80,000	100,000
Mimosa (Individual)	-	150,000
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Moody's seen downgrading . . .

From page B1

The slight recovery posted by the fiscal sector last year, he said, was not enough to offset the weaknesses caused by years of fiscal deficits and increasing level of public debt.

The Moody's official said it would take a "heroic act" to contain the fiscal gap this year within the P197.8-billion ceiling considering the May elections.

The Moody's official said there were strengths that could support the current rating but these might not be enough to offset the weaknesses in other aspects.

"We met with local firms and we found out that there are certain sectors and companies in those sectors that are globally competitive. The problem is that the Philippines is lagging behind other countries in terms of export growth and it doesn't seem to be getting enough boost from the global recovery," said Byrne.

"Another issue is that the country is not attracting enough foreign direct investments because of political uncertainties. The Philippines is not growing as much as it should," he added.

Corazon Guidote, executive director of the country's Investor Relations Office, said that a Moody's downgrade was already discounted by the market.

In the course of the rating review last month, Moody's met with the government economic team and officials of blue-chip firms including Ayala Corp., JG Summit, SM Prime, Lufthansa Technique, Texas Instruments, Intel, Timex and Moog Corp. Moody's officials also met with politicians like Senator Edgardo Angara and political analysts including the INQUIRER's Amando Doronilla.

Guidote said she was hoping that the New York-based rating firm could still be convinced to maintain its rating on the country considering the improving economic numbers and the continuing fiscal consolidation.

Guidote hoped that Moody's would take into consideration the fact that political pressures were temporary and that the country's economic fundamentals were sustainable.

A credit rating downgrade by international rating agencies could push the cost of government borrowings higher, although the financial market was believed to have already discounted the possible rating downgrade.

Taipannic compensation

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE PAY scales of taipans, their siblings and their key executives are as varied as the taipans' personalities, tempered by the profitability of their ventures and by ceilings imposed by convention and competition.

Thanks to tougher government disclosure rules, the public now has a window on how the country's richest reward themselves for their wealth-generating exertions.

For example, John Gokongwei Jr., his son Lance and Mr. John's three brothers, including the chair/CEO James Go, collected P42.25 million in compensation in 2002 on the back of the P2.357-billion net profits the clan generated for their JG Summit holding company.

That translates to about P8.45 million for each Gokongwei, assuming Mr. John pays himself, his brothers and his heir apparent equally. Each of the JG Summit director also receives a grand total of P8,000 fee for every board meeting attended.

The compensation figures do not include directors' bonuses, travel/representation allowances, and the wealth-compounding dividends, as well as other compensation received from other listed Gokongwei companies like Digitel, Universal Robina and Robinsons Land.

Over at Metrobank, the flagship concern of George SK Ty, the taipan and his five top executives received P67.57 million in 2002 after generating P2.508 billion in net income for the banking, automotive, plastics and real estate group.

That's an average of P11.26 million each for Ty and his men.

Cash-rich Henry Sy Sr. may have four listed companies, but the retail king is listed as a working executive only in SM Prime, the holding company for his nationwide mall empire.

For 2002, Tatang's pay envelope and that of four others totaled P17.69 million (bonuses included), or an average of P3.538 million each.

That's quite cost-efficient, considering that SM Prime churned out P3.86 billion in net income for the same year.

The real estate-based taipan, Andrew Gotianun, paid himself,

COCKTALES/B6

Safeguard duty . . .

From page B1

dustry's clamor for protection from unfair competition posed by cheap cement imports from China.

A review of the duty and its impact on the market by the DTI showed that the P20.60 per bag safeguard duty had resulted in unnecessary increases in local prices.

Instead of removing the safeguard duty, however, the DTI decided to keep it but at a lower rate. This, Cristobal said, would help bring down prices without fully exposing local cement to undue competition from cheap imports.

Cement prices nationwide, according to the DTI review, rose to a range of P105 to P110 per 40-kg bag from P80 per bag in 2002. The DTI found the price increase particularly in the latter part of 2003 questionable considering that there were fewer construction projects, then Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II.

The DTI had threatened to withdraw the safeguard duty if the industry would fail to justify the price increases.

The DTI had suspected that local cement makers were into "predatory pricing" and that prompted the review of the safeguard duty.

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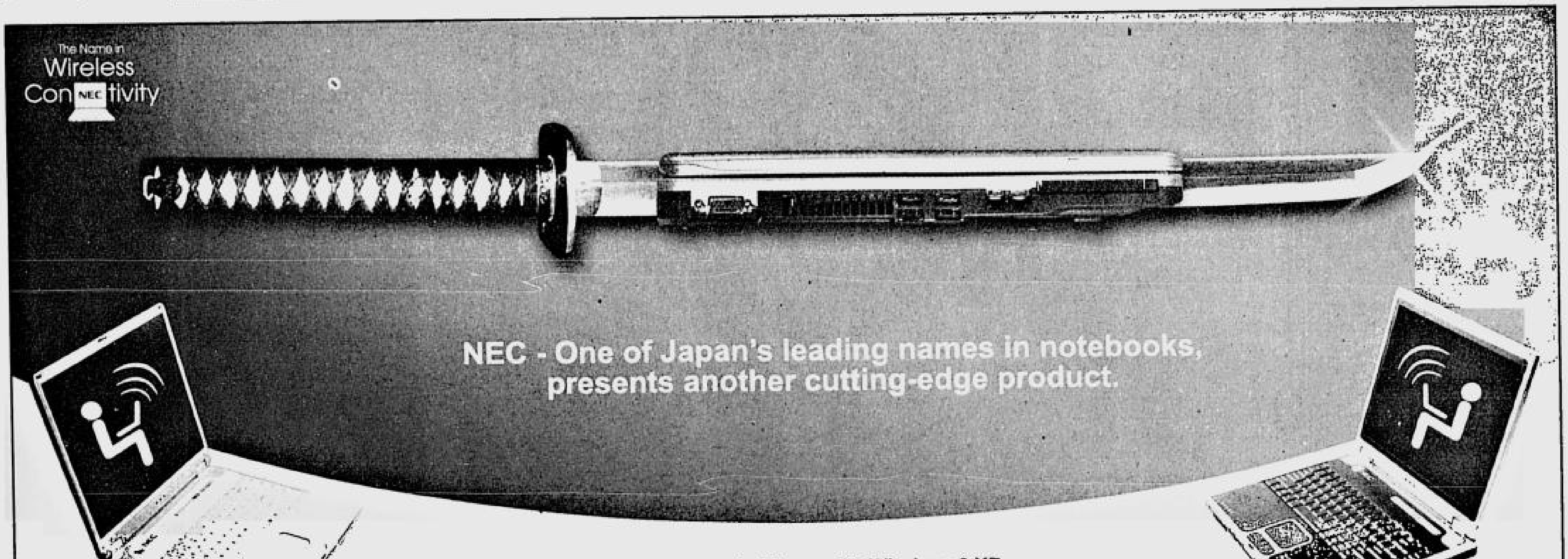

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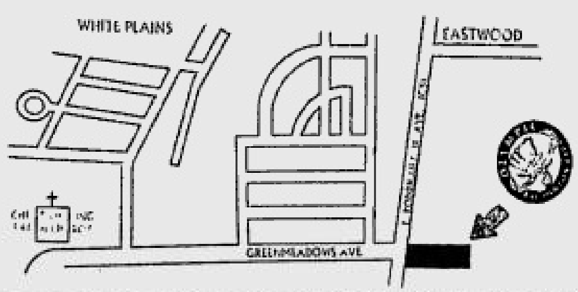

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"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8

LUZ AGUIRRE-BUSTOS

Peacefully joined her Creator on
January 1, 2004

Her remains were cremated on
January 3, 2004

Her daughter **Malu**; her sister **Josefina A. Banawa**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

MARCELA COMBALICER ENVERGA

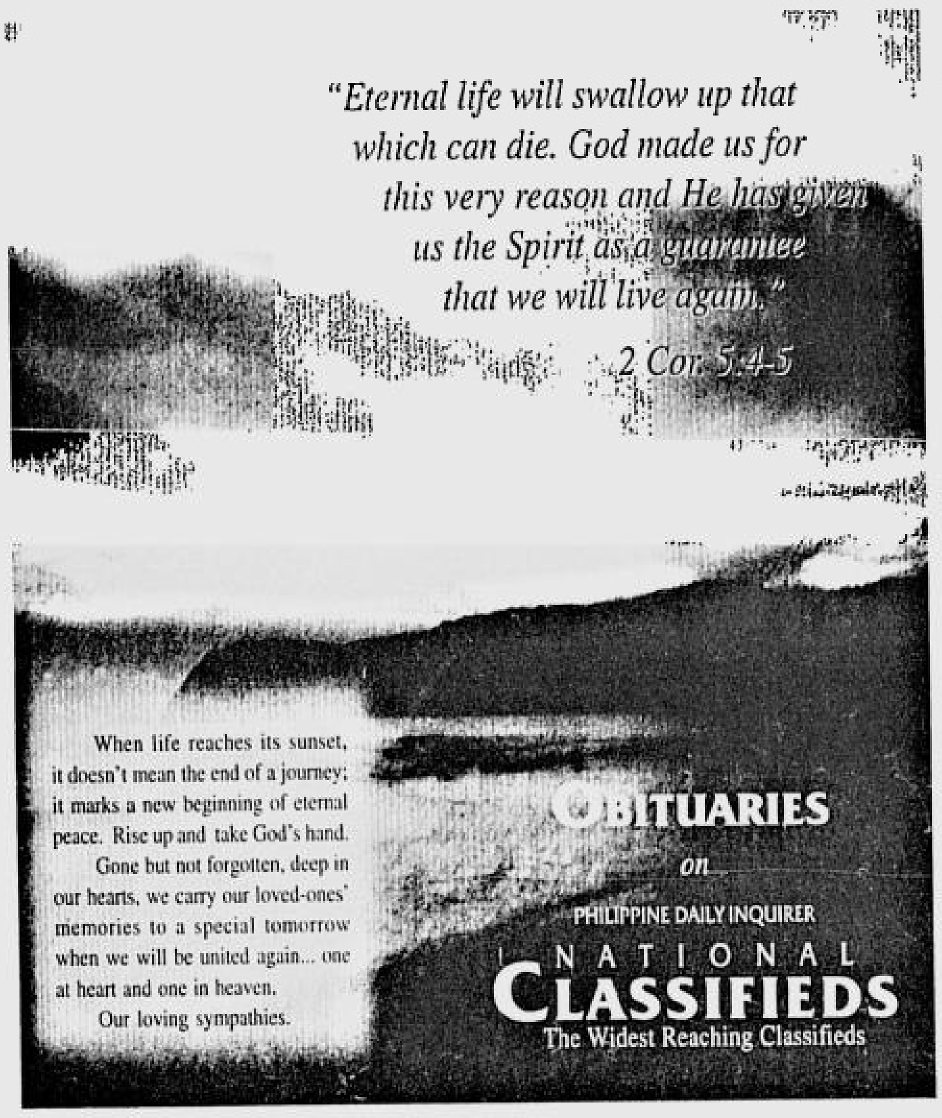
October 30, 1923 – December 28, 2003

Marcela C. Enverga, 80, widow of the late **Dr. Tobias Y. Enverga** of Lucena City and Infanta, Quezon, died in the peace of our Lord, at Queen of the Valley Hospital in West Covina, California, USA.

Marcela is survived by her sister **Emple-Vic Joyas**, and mother **Rafaella**. Children: **Dulce-Dennis Abcede, Soson-Elio Gamit, Leah -Rodor Magsino, Angel-Enone Enverga, Nini-Ernie Guinto, Tobias Jr.-Rosmer Enverga, Teng-Benjo-Bongolan, Bubut-May Enverga**, and **Vincent-Lulu Enverga**. Grandchildren: **Dominique-Marylou, Junjun-Gem, Darren-Vernie, Dinah, Manolo-Marma, Jojo, Carmela-Noor, Odey-Michelle, Trish-Norman, Mabel-Allan, Annette-Jun, Zebedee, Parcae, Zekel, Marci, Carmi, Rystle, Rocel, Reeza, Dunkin, Mark, JR, Maegan, Jayvee, Daniel**, and **Tobias III**. Great-grandchildren: **Nathan, Xaelan, Gio, Samantha, Kiara, Anika, Mika, Mark, Cecilia, Cher, Erika, AJ.**

Remains will arrive today, January 5, 2004 and will lie in state at the Holy Rosary Chapel (near St. Ferdinand Cathedral) in Lucena City.

Interment will be at the St. Ferdinand Memorial Garden on January 8, 2004 after the Holy Mass at 1:00 PM at the St. Ferdinand Cathedral.



"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."

2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset, it doesn't mean the end of a journey; it marks a new beginning of eternal peace. Rise up and take God's hand.

Gone but not forgotten, deep in our hearts, we carry our loved-ones' memories to a special tomorrow when we will be united again... one at heart and one in heaven.

Our loving sympathies.

FELICITAS CARPENA BALAGTAS

of Marikina City
Died in the Grace of our Lord on
January 3, 2004 at the age of 87.

She is survived by her children, **Rolando (Natividad Valdes)** and **Mildred (Benjamin Pascual)**, Eight grandchildren, twenty great grandchildren. Her family and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina, Chapel 3. Interment will take place on January 6, 2004, Tuesday after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the same chapel.

ANNABELLE MARASIGAN-LAVA

Died on January 3, 2004
at the age of 41.

Her bereaved husband **ERIC**; children **HANEKA, ERIKA** and **PONSI**; parents **DR. ALFONSO MARASIGAN** (†) and **NENE**; brothers **BOBBY, GINO** and **MELO**; sister **CECILLE**; parents-in-law **BUDDY** and **JOSEFA LAVA**; brothers-in-law **VIN, STEVE, DAVID** and **BOYET**; sisters-in-law **BOBBY JO, GINA, MALOU, GLORIA, BOCHAY, RUTH** and other relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at the Mortuary Chapel of Sta. Rita Parish Church, Philam, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced later.

"For God so loved the World, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life." —John 3:16

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Looking back and ahead

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Cielito F. Habito

I JUST came across some economic statistics tables from ten years ago and became curious to compare how the Philippine economy was doing ten years ago and how it is doing today. This, in a way, allows us to see what blessings we can count from the year just past, and what challenges remain for us to tackle in the new year ahead.

The economy ten years ago

At the end of 1993, both the GNP and the GDP were growing at 2.6 percent. Full-year inflation rate averaged 7.6 percent, and unemployment rate averaged 9.3 percent nationwide. About 35.5 percent of Filipinos were estimated to earn incomes below the poverty line. The foreign exchange rate averaged P27.12 to the US dollar. Tax revenue accounted for 15.3 percent of the GNP while total revenue amounted to 17.3 percent.

Today, the aggregate economy is growing much faster, at over 4 percent. Prices are much more stable, with inflation rate averaging only at around 3 percent. But the unemployment rate is higher, at around 11 percent. Still, the rate of poverty incidence is less than what it was ten years ago, although it had crept up again since 1998, when it was estimated at under 32 percent. The peso-dollar exchange rate is more than twice what it was ten years ago. And tax revenue now makes up for less than 10 percent of GNP.

In spite of so much negativism and even despair on the part of many, there are real blessings we can be thankful for, based on the economy's aggregate performance of the past year. And all this is in spite of the external challenges brought by the SARS epidemic, the wave of international terrorism, the US-Iraq war and the sluggishness of the economies of our major markets. Still, the rising tide has not lifted all boats, and significant segments of the economy are worse off than before. It is for these people that economic management in 2004 must be addressed.

Why the economy will do better

I can cite at least three reasons why we could expect even better economic performance in 2004.

First, the economies of our major trading partners, especially the US, appear to be improving on a more sustainable manner than before. We had seen several false starts in the US economy in the past few years, but this time the uptrend seems real. The latest annualized growth rate of the US economy was over 8 percent, even rivaling the dynamism of the much-admired (and envied) Chinese economy. Once more, the traditional observation that the American economy is perked up by wars seems to have been affirmed. The other factor is the large Bush tax cut, which appears to have succeeded in provoking the uptick in consumer spending that it was designed to achieve.

All this is good news for us, as our economy remains closely linked to the American economy. But time and again, we have pointed out the danger in such overdependence, and the need to look elsewhere for more active economic relationships. In fact, the current upturn in the US economy will not be as beneficial to us this time around as it would have been in the past, because in 2004, we will no longer enjoy major trade concessions formerly given to us by the US. These include the special access of our textile, garment and sugar exporters to the US market. Still, the US economic upturn is certain to help perk ours up in 2004.

Election spending

The second reason the economy will fare better is election spending. Everyone has come to expect an economic windfall from the massive spending that accompanies election campaigns, and this year will be no exception. The rush to complete vote-drawing infrastructure projects, the manufacture of campaign paraphernalia from T-shirts to posters and streamers, and the deplorable but undeniable flow of large sums of money to buy votes will all translate into an additional percentage point or so of GNP growth.

The danger that must be avoided is the likelihood of higher inflation, although more recent elections have no longer been marked by the kind of election-provoked inflationary surges we saw in the 70s and 80s. The monetary authorities have been vigilant enough to forestall this, and the fiscal managers know better than allow the government deficit to widen and heighten such inflationary risk.

Improving fundamentals

The third reason I can cite is the slow but sure improvement in our so-called economic fundamentals, particularly in the government's revenue and fiscal performance. Both the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue are to be credited with meeting or exceeding their collection targets in the past year. This has allowed the government to end the year with what is expected to be a better than targeted fiscal balance. But we remain far from recovering the level of tax and revenue effort we had already achieved in the mid-1990s. It is critical, then, that the administration to be elected into office be able to improve on this positive trend—and not repeat the downslide we saw after the 1998 change of government.

I have been looking at comparative government budget numbers from some of our neighboring countries. It is no surprise why we have been left behind by our more dynamic neighbors when one sees how much more their governments are able to spend per citizen. We taxpayers simply have to resolve to contribute more to uplifting our economy in 2004 and in the years to come. Let that be one of our New Year's resolutions.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

PSE to raise brokers' payment to clearing, trade guaranty fund

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange seeks to enhance investor confidence in its settlement system by increasing the brokers' contribution to the clearing and trade guaranty fund.

The fund is used to cover possible failures by buyers and sellers of securities to settle their trades at the PSE.

In its plans and prospectus, the PSE said increasing the fund was in line with its efforts to increase the reliability of and confidence in the settlement system.

"A higher fund level will increase coverage of risks of failure to deliver by trading participants on a transaction done in the PSE," the PSE said.

The PSE said the fund would be increased by raising the contribution of the brokers based on their monthly turnover volumes.

All eligible trades executed at the PSE go through the Securities Clearing Corp. of the Philippines (SCCP), which is responsible for establishing the liabilities between the trading participants, synchronizing the settlement of funds and the transfer of securities and guaranteeing the settlement of trades in the event of default.

The PSE owns 51 percent of the SCCP. Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and Equitable PCI Bank own 22 percent each while Citibank NA owns 5 percent.

Another measure planned by the PSE to enhance its management of settlement risks is the implementation of a trading cap this year.

The trading cap for each participant shall be based on the contribution to the clearing and trade guaranty fund.

"The implementation of the trading cap will take into consideration market and credit risks. Management of the risks would include an online, real-time monitoring of trades, reporting of trading participants' net capital and financial position, and proper valuation of required collateral from the trading participants," the PSE said.

Trading participants that would exceed their limits would be required to increase their contribution to the fund.

Finally, the PSE also plans to migrate from the current net capital reporting system to a risk-based capitalization model, in anticipation of proposed changes in the implementing rules of the Securities Regulation Code.

This initiative is spearheaded by the Securities and Exchange Commission with the cooperation of the PSE.

The PSE also aims to implement a fully automated and real-time reporting system.

BDO-Equitable PCI merger eyed

From page B1

and that a meeting must be convened within the next 60 to 90 days.

The BDO official agreed that a BDO-Equitable PCI merger would create an institution with a solid financial muscle.

He estimated that a merger with BDO would double Equitable PCI's return on equity, which is currently at only 1-2 percent, since BDO's ROE is about 9 percent.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that while the central bank has yet to be advised of the plans of the two banks, any consolidation within the banking system was always welcome.

"Our strategy of a moratorium on new bank branches and licenses is what's making these (mergers and acquisitions) possible, by giving value to those who want to exit and allowing big banks to buy the smaller ones," Buenaventura said.

With the BDO-SSS deal, the Go family will remain the bank's second biggest stockholder with a 24-percent stake. The Government Service Insurance System will keep its 6-percent interest in the bank.

The BSP had been encouraging Equitable PCI Bank to take in a strong partner, especially after the bank was hit by bank runs a few years ago that prompted it to seek billions of pesos in financial assistance from the central Social Security System president Cora dela Paz said the SSS had agreed to sell its stake to the Sy family because it would greatly strengthen the bank's shareholder base.

Cocktales . . .

From page B3

his wife Mercedes, and three senior executives P18.1 million in 2002, or an average of P3.62 million each, on the back of the P504-million net income of Filinvest Land for the same year.

Also for 2002, the Gotianun couple and four other senior executives received a total of P25.5 million, or an average of P4.25 million each, from Filinvest Development Corp.

The holding company of the most visible of all taipans, Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco, sailed through some rough financial waters in recent years at the same time its family was being buffeted by succession issues.

For 2002, the House of Investments suffered a P71.01-million loss, from the P182.2-million loss the Yuchengco holding company incurred the previous year. Consequently, the compensation for its CEO, daughter Helen Yuchengco-Dee, and four other senior officers shrank to P11.7 million in 2002, or an average of P2.34 million each, from P15.7 million in 2001.

Taipan Lucio Tan is the toughest to track, considering that the base of his financial empire, Fortune Tobacco, is an unlisted concern. Ditto with Tan's Philippine Airlines and Asia Brewery.

The former janitor who rose to become the country's rumored richest taipan appears only as a director of the Philippine National Bank, which he co-owns with the government.

He is listed as chair of Tanduay Holdings, but the distillery company has submitted so far only the truncated version of its by now antiquated 2000 annual report to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Macro Asia, the listed airline ground handling company run by Tan's junior, is more up-to-date.

Lucio Tan Jr. and five other top MacroAsia executives reported receiving in 2002 an aggregate P9.36 million compensation, or an average of about P1.58 million each, after squeaking in a P3-million net income for the company.

The year before, the junior Tan and his five MacroAsia executives were paid a much smaller package of P5.13 million, or an average of P855,000 each, despite generating P83 million in profits for the same year.

ABS-CBN, Ayala salaries

AYALA Corp. took exception to the Dec. 22 Cocktales item, claiming that the column had erred in reporting the compensation figures to arrive at an erroneous conclusion that the Zobel brothers and their three top executives had been paying themselves even more while the conglomerate's profits skidded through the years.

So as to give a better perspective on the Ayala's profits-versus-compensation picture, here is a year-by-year comparison:

- 1999 net income, P5.11 billion, vs P69.9 million compensation (note: the 1998 net income was P6.6 billion)
- 2000 net income, P2.4 billion, vs P75.26 million compensation
- 2001 net income, P2.1 billion, vs P76.1 million compensation
- 2002 net income, P2.39 billion, vs P71.29 million compensation (after restructuring that cut down employee number by 40 percent, and reduced divisions to five from 11)
- Projected 2003 compensation, P78.426 million.

ABS-CBN spokesperson Maloli Espinosa-Manalastas also wrote to clarify that the leading broadcast company increased executive compensation last year only after president Federico Garcia had successfully returned the company's profitability back to near-2001 record level.

But in 2001 and 2002, the compensation of Garcia and four top ABS-CBN executives had remained relatively flat, with no bonuses ever paid, Manalastas said.

Heard through the grapevine

PLDT has removed its P1.8-billion media placement budget out of Ace Saatchi & Saatchi and transferred it to Optimum Media of the DDB and Omnicom Group.

The PLDT contract effectively ratcheted up Optimum Media to become the second largest media independent company with estimated gross billings now of P2.8 billion a year.

Incidentally, Optimum Media's chairman is recently retired PLDT spokesperson Antonio Samson.

PLDT has also awarded its chairman Antonio Cojuangco III and his partner, lobbyist Jose Manuel "Babe" Romualdez, P52.7 million to cover two years of "consultancy and advisory services."

(E-mail: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 30, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.75	17.25	17.75	186,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47	46.5	46.5	673,200
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank, Inc.	34.5	34.5	33.5	33.5	80,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.5	0.52	17,000,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	1,397,100
Philippine National Bank	24	24.25	24	24.25	13,100
Philippine Trust Co.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	1,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	20,300
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	17.25	16.5	17.25	173,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26	26	11,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.4	43,000
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	130,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1750	1750	1750	1750	780
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	62,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1350	1370	1350	1365	6,050
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	25	25	25	21,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	1,080,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	845	860	67,400
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.97	380,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.039	0.04	2,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	58,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.89	0.9	0.88	0.88	4,150,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	990	990	970	970	270,470
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	11,800,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15	15	14.75	15	920,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	1,141,900
Petron Corp.	2.28	2.28	2.26	2.26	2,875,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	1	0.96	1	3,610,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	176,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,370,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	140,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	120,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	2,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	61,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.25	284,500
RFM Corp.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	40,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54	54.5	97,900
San Miguel Corp. B	64	64	63.5	64	146,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	60,000
Ayala Corp.	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	1,891,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	130,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48	660,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	550,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16	340,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	300,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	70,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.06	1.2	1.06	1.2	640,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	19	19	18.75	18.75	381,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2	2.16	2	2.1	4,399,000
Medco Holdings	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Megaworld Corp	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	2,420,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	20,600,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	700,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	740,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar de Tarlac	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	2,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	20,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.1	7.1	7	7	61,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.18	1.08	1.16	221,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	32	44	32	44	6,200
Pryce Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	400,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	223,500
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	2,440,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	470,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	50,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	7,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	25	25.5	24.75	25	322,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.6	10.25	7.5	10.25	705,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.2	6	6.1	13,494,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	180,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	446,000
Highlands Prime, Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.2	350,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.155	0.17	0.155	0.17	400,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.1	2.6	2.1	2.6	1,345,000
SM Development Corp	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	100,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	1,478,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	2,000,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.8	36,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,630,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	3,490,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	57,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.41	1,400,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	220,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.0028	0.0028	527,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.003	0.003	165,000,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	2,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	500,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.17	0.175	0.17	0.175	210,000

CURRENCIES

January 4, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.800961	1.000000	55.569000
Japan	Yen	0.007478	0.009336	0.518800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.420024	1.772900	98.518300
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103186	0.128828	7.158800
Switzerland	Franc	0.640871	0.800128	44.462300
Canada	Dollar	0.611141	0.763009	42.399600
Singapore	Dollar	0.470655	0.587613	32.653100
Australia	Dollar	0.594317	0.742005	41.232500
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.124622	2.652590	147.401800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213590	0.266667	14.818400
Brunei	Dollar	0.469277	0.585892	32.557400
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020236	0.025265	1.404000
UAE	Dirham	0.218085	0.272279	15.130300
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.248500	69.377900
Argentina	Peso *	0.271512	0.338983	18.836900
Brazil	Real	0.280155	0.349773	19.436500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134324	0.167704	9.319100
India	Rupee	0.017565	0.021930	1.218600
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210807	0.263193	14.625400
Mexico	New Peso	0.071406	0.089150	4.954000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519262	0.648298	36.025300
Norway	Kroner	0.118643	0.148126	8.231200
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013939	0.017403	0.967100
South Africa	Rand	0.119161	0.148772	8.267100
Korea	Won	0.000669	0.000835	0.046400
Sweden	Kroner	0.110101	0.137461	7.638600
Syria	Pound	0.018101	0.022599	1.255800
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023585	0.029446	1.636300
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000502	0.000627	0.034800

Sluggish trading seen

From page B1

noting the increased stock prices of some shares.

"Investors are likely to maintain their short-term outlook given the upcoming elections in May," BPI Securities said.

"As yet, it is too early to determine who among the many candidates will emerge as frontrunners. This measure of uncertainty will affect equity investments over the near-term," it added.

The brokerage house said, however, that there was still room to be optimistic about the earnings of selected sectors like telecommunications, which in, turn, should attract investor interest in the local stock market.

"Substantive investments, however, may remain elusive until after elections in May," it said.

AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan agreed that the outlook for this year remained uncertain due to the upcoming presidential elections.

"Trading may start on a cautious note as investors will be wary of the coming developments related to the elections," he said.

Vistan said support for the index should be at 1,435 points while the resistance level was pegged at 1,480 points. *Doris C. Dumlao*

E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Leo Magno

IT spending to grow 6-8% in 2004: IDC

OUTLOOK 2004

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

INFORMATION technology spending will grow 6 to 8 percent in 2004 due to a more optimistic US market and pent-up demand after years of austerity, research firm International Data Corp (IDC) said in a recent report.

In its "IDC Predictions 2004: New IT Growth Wave, New Game Plan" report, the research firm labeled 2004 as a year of "technology resurrection."

In 2004, consumer spending on technology will become stronger, offshore IT outsourcing will continue, and wireless technology adoption (mainly due to the mobile phone technology boom worldwide) will flourish, IDC added.

The rosy picture for 2004 has boosted the technology-dominated stocks in Nasdaq. The Nasdaq composite index went past 2,000 points at the end of 2003 and closed at 33.34 or 1.7 percent at 2,006.48—the highest in nearly two years, according to IDC.

IDC indicated that the improvement of the US economy in recent weeks has contributed to a more positive outlook for IT spending in 2004. This optimism, IDC noted, will drive IT spending and generate better prospects for enterprises that are considered the biggest spenders in IT.

IDC, however, said that a better spending environment will not mean more jobs for the high-tech industry, specifically in the United States.

The movement of IT jobs offshore will persist in 2004 and in the coming years. IDC predicted that the value of IT services provided to US businesses from offshore labor will double to $16 billion next year and further shoot up to $46 billion by 2007.

OUTLOOK 2004

IT professionals in US see salary increases in 2004

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

INFORMATION technology professionals in the United States expect salary increases in 2004 after two consecutive years of austerity, a report indicated.

Of more than 2,000 IT professionals who were surveyed, about two-thirds indicated that they see increases of up to 5 percent in 2004 compared with the last two years, the Brainbench 2003 IT Salary Survey report said.

Brainbench is a company engaged in online skills measurement.

The report also showed that only women working for large corporations were able to overcome the male-female wage gap that was seen again in the technology sector after the boom of the late 1990s.

The "positive" 2004 expectations among US-based IT professionals reflect a renewed optimism, the report added.

More than 60 percent of the respondents expect a 1- to 5-percent salary increase in 2004, while about 40 percent reported increases in that range for 2003.

The report noted that salary increases have always been put on hold due to economic forces directly affecting the technology sector in 2003.

Still, 66 percent of respondents indicated they received increases of 3 percent or less in 2003. This was slightly up from 2002, when 62 percent of the respondents reported receiving salary increases of 3 percent or less.

"The latest IT salary survey showed that information technology workers of virtually every industry are gearing up for the economic recovery," says Brainbench president and chief executive officer Mike Russiello. "They used the lull to beef up their credentials, and are now ready to make the most of the emerging opportunities. The survey proves that continuous education and constant new skills development, confirmed through professional certifications, are the key to both survival and prosperity under any economic conditions."

Report predicts global semiconductor market to grow 18%

OUTLOOK 2004

SINGAPORE—The global semiconductor market is forecast to grow 18 percent next year on rising sales of mobile cellular phones and personal computers, according to International Data Corp.

The forecast is a revision from the 16-percent increase originally estimated in April 2003 and was prompted by robust industry growth in the second half of 2003.

IDC's industry growth forecast for this year was sharply revised from 9.0 percent to 14 percent.

Over a five-year period from 2003, the research house expects the semiconductor market to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 12.5 percent, with revenues seen rising to $282 billion in 2008 from $160 billion this year.

"As 2003 closes, growth expectations for the semiconductor market are on the rise, particularly after a very strong recovery in the second half of the year," the technology research house said in a statement.

"Stronger-than-expected mobile phone and PC shipments have stabilized average selling prices and increased capacity utilization rates among suppliers."

IDC said sales of mobile phones and computers should grow at double-digit rates this year and next.

Asia Pacific dominates the global production and demand for mobile phones and computers, with China the main driver.

Semiconductor demand in China represents over one quarter of the $60-billion Asia-Pacific market and the world's most populous nation is expected to account for almost half of this by 2008.

AFP

'Co-opetition' in RP software industry urged

A PHILIPPINE-based information technology outsourcing firm urged the local software industry to pursue more collaborative initiatives if it wants to compete in the global market.

"It is about time for us to work together to have a common platform and vision," said Nora Terrado, general manager of Headstrong Philippines Inc.

Terrado acknowledged that the Philippines cannot match the sheer number of Indian software companies that are now taking majority of the offshore software projects from the United States.

It is therefore necessary that co-opetition—the concept of businesses cooperating while competing at the same time—should happen between the two countries, she added.

Still, she said that the Philippine software industry should not despair since "India would soon be load-sharing some of the jobs to the country" with the growing demand in the offshore software outsourcing market.

Headstrong (formerly known as James Martin and Company) operates global resource centers worldwide, including the Philippines and India.

Philippine operations deal primarily with outsourced jobs mainly from US clients in the financial services industry. The global outsourcing firm recently announced a merger with information technology consulting firm Techspan.

Currently, the local operations employ close to 200 Filipinos, mostly engaged in system design, Web development, and business process consulting.

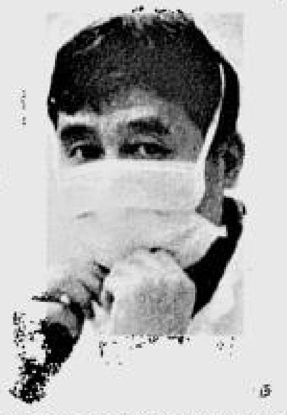
"The global software outsourcing market is adjusting. The needs of the buyers of software are also changing. But we believe that the Philippines can fulfill a certain niche in this market," Terrado said.

Erwin G. Oliva

2003 recap: Bumpy road to ICT industry recovery

MICROSOFT Philippines country manager Kevin Hou resigned from his post last year.

BERNARD Yu left Oracle Philippines after more than a decade with the company.



SARS was partly to blame for the industry slowdown in 2003.

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

THE YEAR 2003 was slightly better than 2002 for the information and communications technology (ICT) industry. But it was not a smooth ride, as the high-tech industry was battered by unforeseen events like the global outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the war on Iraq.

Consumer spending improved in 2003 to the surprise of analysts worldwide. Still, performance in the enterprise market—which has traditionally been the major source of business for the ICT industry—was lackluster.

In the Philippines, 2003 was the year when the call center industry saw the entry of more players—mainly offshore operations of US-based call center companies. As the country became a more attractive destination for offshore operations of call center service providers, the country witnessed more investments pouring in this year from this so-called sunshine industry.

It was also in 2003 when the country once again revived the much-delayed creation of a super ICT body. The Information and Communications Technology Commission—an interim body to the proposed ICT department—was pushed by the Information Technology and E-commerce Council, the highest ICT policymaking body in the country. However, politics prevailed and the ICT Commission was once again shelved. This was despite a strong backing from Malacañang.

Past issues were also revived in 2003, including the matter of the ".ph" Internet domain. After years of silence, both government and private sector groups revisited plans to address issues involving the Internet domain. Issues included the re-delegation of the country-code top-level domain to a multisectoral body with the aim of breaking the monopoly of Joel Disini, the current administrator of the Internet domain, and head of DotPh Inc., the only ".ph" registry in the country.

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) was eventually mandated as the "oversight" body for the administration of the ".ph" Internet domain. A consultative body to the NTC composed of government and private sector representatives was also created in 2003 to develop new guidelines for the administration of the Internet domain. The NTC was supposed to hold the first public hearing on the ".ph" domain issue in December 2003, but this was pushed back to 2004.

Some time in the middle of 2003, the NTC was once again involved in another controversial issue involving the war for the airwaves.

The NTC led a consultation with various stakeholders in the private sector who wanted the government to finally create the guidelines for the commercial use of wireless fidelity technology (wi-fi) in the Philippines. Unfortunately, wi-fi uses a specific radio frequency that has been licensed by the NTC to utility firm Manila Electric Co.

In 2003, the local ICT industry also saw musical chairs happening both in the private sector and government with top executives of multinational ICT firms, as well as government officials, announcing their resignation or retirement.

Executive movements

The year 2003 was witness to the resignation and retirement of key executives from Oracle Philippines, Cisco Systems Philippines and Microsoft Philippines.

Bernard Yu, who had been the managing director of Oracle Philippines for close to 11 years, announced his retirement, surprising the local IT industry. Raymund Huang of Cisco Philippines also left his company "silently" this year for unknown reasons. Finally, the rumored Filipino replacement to Taiwanese Kevin Hou of Microsoft Philippines was announced late in 2003. Antonio "TJ" Javier, formerly of SAP Philippines prior to joining Microsoft two years ago, was named as the new managing director for the local subsidiary of the software giant. He is scheduled to take over this year.

We also saw the resignations of top government officials from computer agencies like the National Computer Center (NCC) and the Advance Science and Technology Institute (ASTI). After almost a year, Ibarra Gonzales of the NCC left the computer agency due to personal reasons. Delfin Jay Sabido of ASTI also left the research and development arm of the Department of Science and Technology to take a break from government service and go back to the academe.

Controversial projects

As expected, controversial government ICT projects also hogged the headlines in 2003.

After recovering from internal politicking among its officials, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) faced a tough time with some local ICT industry groups. Several ICT groups criticized the poll modernization projects following reports that the bidding of a multibillion poll automation project was allegedly flawed.

Comelec officials, however, flatly denied the allegations. Nonetheless, the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines, an umbrella organization of local industry groups, and several individuals subsequently filed a petition to the Supreme Court, asking the high tribunal to stop the controversial project due to the alleged anomalies in the bidding procedures.

Another controversial project this year involved the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) modernization of its procurement system. After losing the bid for the P250-million-project to a low-profile company led by an American executive, the Ayala Systems Technology Inc. accused the winning bidder of failing to comply with government rules on the bidding process. A multi-agency body eventually absolved the DBM and the winning bidder of any alleged wrongdoings and flaws in the bidding.

Another interesting news item in 2003 involved the approval of the e-government fund in 2003. This fund—worth P4 billion—was created to support select government modernization projects. At least nine government agencies were identified as beneficiaries of the fund including the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Bureau of Customs, the Department of Health, the Anti-Money Laundering Council, the National Computer Center, and the Department of Science and Technology, among others.

Of course, we remember 2003 as the year when the global outbreak of SARS sent economies reeling and investments down in all sectors including ICT. Add to that the war in Iraq—opposed by many nations—which caused anxiety all over the world. This forced companies to delay their ICT investments and projects.

Nevertheless, the ICT industry somehow recovered in the last quarter of the year, as analysts projected better, albeit modest, revenue growths. Consumer spending on high-tech gadgets like mobile phones also buoyed some industries, hinting that hard times are over for the high-tech industry. The local electronics industry recently projected a 10-percent growth in 2004 after a "flat" year in 2003.

All in all, 2003 turned out to be an interesting year with its own share of controversies, good news and interesting human drama (not to mention politics) that makes the year worth remembering.

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BUSINESS Monday Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Growing too fast is not always a good idea

By Myrna R. Co
Contributor
UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries

WHICH small enterprise is averse to growth?

Growth may mean many things. It may mean volume increase, product diversification and market expansion. Growth may also take the form of backward or forward integration, strategic partnerships and alliances. Correlated to these growth moves are technology and production systems adoption, capital building, manpower expansion and organizational sophistication.

It is possible, however, to grow too fast. Premature attempts to grow have caused many businesses to stumble. Some of the mistakes have been very costly.

Portland Shoe Manufacturing had successfully built a niche in manufacturing industrial shoes when it decided to go into casual shoe making in 1995. Producing the new line was easy for owner Fernando Ao, since he already had basic production facilities. What he was not prepared for was the cut-throat competition. With so many established brands, there didn't seem to be more room for yet another brand in the casual shoe market. Worse, he neglected his bread-and-butter line in his efforts to diversify.

Renato Pleno entered into a joint venture with a Taiwanese partner in a bid to fast-track the growth of his ceramics company, Renaissance Ceramic Arts Inc. Under the terms of the agreement, Taiwanese technicians were expected to be deployed at RCAI's Cavite plant to transfer technology to the local workers. The foreign technicians did not show up and Renato and his crew had to learn new production methods by trial and error.

Lourd's Jewelers built up a network of agents to expand its marketing reach. Exposure to these agents ran into millions of pesos. It was a risky arrangement, but owners Modesta and Nena Rubio must have wanted to grow quickly. As it turned out, two of the agents ran off with jewelry worth a million pesos. The scam caused the company to close shop for a while.

Another costly lesson was learned by the couple when they were asked to supply 5,000 pairs of gold plated earrings for export, with promise of bigger orders thereafter. The company had not done costume jewelry before, but couldn't resist the challenge to diversify and venture into export. The Rubios learned too late that their operation couldn't switch from fine to costume jewelry overnight. In the end, they weren't able to serve the order in the volume and timetable required.

Gigi Campos, Bacolod-based handicraft entrepreneur, wanted at one time, to integrate her handicraft operations. Her main product line was *pandan* baskets with ceramic accessories. To solve her problem with ceramic supplies, she set up an in-house ceramic operation, which did not flourish. "It was not cost effective. Artists and moulders were paid a daily rate but their output was low."

As these examples show, growing a small enterprise too hastily is fraught with danger. It can send a small-scale operation into a tailspin. If you're young and small, take care to expand only at a rate you can afford and control.

Here are some more tips on keeping growth in check from Debra Schofield of Guerilla Tactics.

- Let your marketing operations grow commensurate with your employee base, manufacturing capacity, quality control and financing.
- It is always important to put money back into the company and remain profitable. Remember that every time you

GROWING/B2-3

Tax evasion a way of life, death in the Philippines

MANILA—As head of the tax fraud division, Armando Rosimo was at the sharp end of the Philippines' efforts to stamp out a culture of tax evasion that has cemented its reputation as the sick man of Asia.

Just how sharp apparently became clear early one morning last month when he was executed by a group of gunmen waiting outside his Manila house, two days before US President George W. Bush told the Philippine Congress the country was a beacon of Asian democracy.

If a stable democracy is measured by the government's ability to collect and put to good use tax from its citizens and businesses—the most basic part of the social contract—the Philippines is far from a shining example to its neighbors.

It is a classic chicken-and-egg problem.

Rampant corruption in the bureaucracy means that tax is widely seen as going straight into the pockets of officials, rather than improving infrastructure or helping the poor.

But without a higher tax take, the government can't afford to raise bureaucrats' meagre salaries and wean them off kickbacks.

Its huge budget deficit grows, sucking an even greater share of taxpayer money into debt servicing and away from the 30 million or so Filipinos living in poverty.

Rosimo's killing is still being investigated by police.

If, as seems likely, it was work-related, it would encapsulate many of the reasons why the Philippines has become a place where investors fear to tread. Among them—poor security, weak rule of law and endemic corruption.

The 47-year-old, who began every day with a period of prayer and meditation, was by most accounts a likeable, diligent man.

But his job as head of a team investigating cases of tax evasion and recommending which ones should be prosecuted would have assured him some powerful enemies.

"We will not be cowed from our mandate to collect and assess the proper taxes," Sulpicio Adapon, a section chief at the fraud division who worked closely with Rosimo, told Reuters.

Analysts estimate the Philippine tax net manages to scoop up only about 50 to 60 percent of potential revenues, making it a major culprit behind a budget deficit seen totaling $3.6 billion this year. Much of the missing $4 billion or so is either tax evaded or soaked up by corruption in the main tax agencies.

Two to tango

The finger of blame is usually pointed at poorly paid officials, who have grown used to supplementing their incomes with bribes and who fiercely resist attempts at reform.

Officials can expect a starting salary of around P12,000 ($217) a month at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), around half what they could make in the private sector.

The previous BIR chief, Rene Bañez, quit last year after running into intense opposition within the agency to planned reforms that would have imposed performance benchmarks and made it easier to fire inept officials.

Rosario Manasan, a tax expert at the Philippine Institute of Development Studies, said that despite an improved tax take this year, the longer-term trend showed rising evasion.

She said tax revenue fell by more than three percentage points of gross domestic product between 1997 and 2001, with most of the losses stemming from the BIR.

"It works both ways. You can't just blame the tax administration, the taxpayers also play a part," she said.

"There are two players there all the time." Tess Bacalla, a journalist who has investigated BIR corruption, said the bulk of evasion was worked out at one-on-one meetings between examiners and taxpayers.

"At their level, there's a lot of discretion," she said. "It's at the level of examiner where corruption is really at its worst." Her recent investigation found BIR officials with salaries of less than 300,000 pesos ($5,400) living in huge houses with luxury cars parked outside.

Crumbling roads, foul rivers

To get an idea of the attitude of businesses to the taxman, a visit to Manila's bustling but run-down Chinatown district of Binondo is instructive.

The industriousness evident in its warrens of small businesses selling everything from medicine to steel contrasts sharply with signs of crumbling infrastructure all around.

Electricity cables dangle precariously above pedestrians' heads, rubbish litters potholed streets, and a river exudes a stench that vies strongly with the aroma of steamed dumplings.

Speaking in whispers to a visitor inside her small office supply store, Lina estimates that business people in the area paid only about half the tax they were supposed to, because they could get away with it and because the money never came back in the form of public services.

"We know how much corruption there is," she said. "There is no road improvement and the poor still live all along the river."

A high-profile campaign against corruption by President Macapagal-Arroyo has yet to dispel the perception that tax rules only apply to those without the right connections.

A P27-billion evasion case against Lucio Tan, one of the Philippines' richest tycoons, has dragged on for a decade with no end in sight.

Reform hopes slim

Hopes for reform of the leaky system rest on a bill in Congress that, if passed, would have radical implications for tax bureaucrats and evaders.

The proposed National Authority for Revenue Administration would be semi-autonomous and staffed only by officials who pass a strict examination and get higher salaries in return.

Thousands of BIR employees could lose

TAX/B2-3

Now, Philhealth helps pay for Laser Eye Correction

Very recently, laser eye correction has been reclassified as one of the procedures now covered by Philhealth – making this kind of healthcare assistance the first in the world.

At American Eye Center, qualified Philhealth members can now enjoy substantial savings in LASIK (laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis) to cure nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism.

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Maybank has made it to the FT500 list this year.

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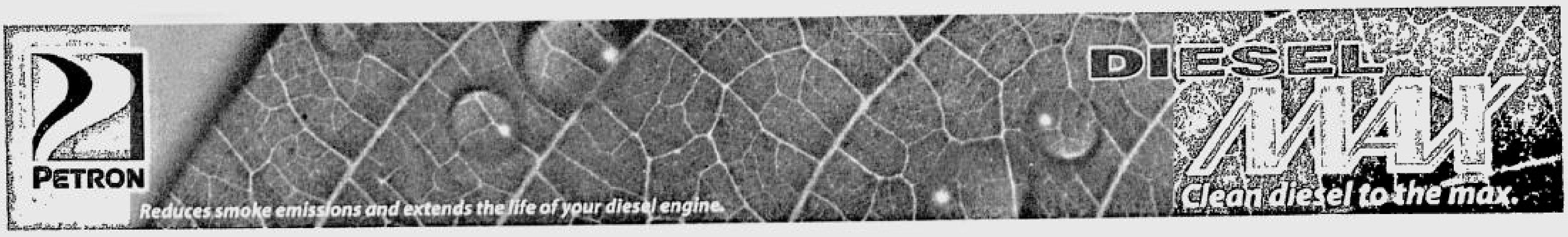
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Panasonic SM Mall Cup Tour unfolds in Baguio

WILL THE chill of the highlands of Baguio mix well with the heat of the Tamiya M4WD car racing competition?

Racers will find the answer to that as the Panasonic SM Cup Mall Tour opens at the summer capital of the Philippines.

Following up the highly successful "1st Let's & Go!! Tamiya M4WD Car Racing, The Race that Rules!!", which will stage its Grand Prix on Jan. 11 at the Amazing World of Lights and Lanterns at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Panasonic SM Cup Mall Tour promises more cars, more racers, more challenging races and bigger prizes.

Racers from the City of Pines can get to take part in the high-speed Tamiya M4WD car racing action. A total of P1.2 million worth of prizes will be given away to weekly winners and to the racers who will top the Grand Prix.

The checkered flag falls on Jan. 11 at SM North Edsa, at the SM Megamall Atrium A on Jan. 18 and at the SM Centerpoint Centerstage on Jan. 25. All winners automatically qualify for the Grand Prix slated in the last quarter of the year.

Racers are allowed to use any Tamiya motor and any Tamiya car model. Racers are allowed to register up to five cars. Upon registration racers should present an empty wrapper of Walter Layer Cake. Registration fee per car is P50. Only authentic Tamiya cars and accessories and Panasonic Alkaline Batteries will be used for the race.

This is a shout out to all the Jets and Joeys of Tamiya M4WD: Spread the news and pack up your race box for the much-awaited race of the year.

For inquiries, e-mail Sherwin Abuel at sherwin_abuel@creative-products.com.ph or call Creative Products Corp at 725-0901, 725-0793, 718-2110 and 718-2112.

SILVER SWAN BAGS 2003 FAMILY AND CONSUMERS CHOICE AWARDS

Silver Swan Manufacturing Corp was recently awarded the 2003 Family and Consumers' Choice Award for the brands Silver Swan Soy Sauce, Sukang Puti and Cane Vinegar. Shown presenting the award to Manuel Magbanua, brand manager of Philippine General Merchandising Corp (PGMC), the exclusive distributor of SSMC, is German Moreno, surrounded by the members of the awards committee (from left) Quezon City Councilor Jorge L. Banal, Edith Lim, Gov. Leonida 'Baby' Ortiz and Gov. Justo M. Ortiz, awards chair.

LIFESTYLES BUSINESS BUILDER TOUR HITS MANILA

A much-awaited event for Lifestyles distributors throughout the country unfolded recently at the Metropolis Star Cinema in Alabang, Metro Manila. The Lifestyles' Business Builder World Tour, on its Asian leg, featured some of the top distributors all over the world. The featured speakers shared their formula for success and their experiences on doing a very stable business-beyond-borders with Lifestyles' remarkable products. Lifestyles has become a leader in the multilevel marketing industry, delivering quality health and food supplements to people in over 30 countries. Shown is newly promoted national marketing director J. Christian David (3rd from left), recognized at the World Tour. Among the awardees were (from left) Lifestyles chair David De Borah, president David Drutz, vice president for international business development Warren Te Brugge, regional director of operations Lucille Villa and assistant country manager Voltaire Orpilla.

Home makeover made easy with pressure cleaning

WASHING home exteriors, especially when the surfaces are textured, has never been an easy task, until now.

Tony Lessa, president of Pristine Pressure Cleaning Inc, came up with a brilliant idea to bring back the brilliance of home and building surfaces here in the Philippines by setting aside the sponge, mop, soap and water, and using instead a pressure cleaner.

Pressure cleaning is the first-ever cleaning method now available in the Philippines that utilizes 4,000 PSI (pressure per square inch) to disintegrate the toughest, most ancient dirt, dust, soot or grime embedded in the minutest surface crevices. The cleaning solution is alkaline-based, which means that it is non-toxic, non-corrosive, and environmentally safe. The solution dissolves dirt, grease, and any type of grime, mold, mildew, or moss. Then, with a variety of nozzles and settings to adjust the degree of concentration, the powerful pressure washer blasts away all traces of residue, leaving porous surfaces, and even wood or glass, spic and span in a snap.

With a sponge or a mop, soap and water, we end up moving the dirt around, and never really remove it. Pressure cleaning revives surface quality, almost, to its original state. Eighty percent of all dirt is expelled from just one procedure, leaving surfaces truly clean and smelling fresh. In addition, pressure cleaning can function as a primer that extedns the life of a paint job, which in effect keeps the value of a property at a maximum.

"You've cleaned it," says Lessa as he retells the general reaction of his amazed clients. "You should see their expression. Most of them are dumbfounded, really," he adds. Pristine Pressure Cleaning is the only company in the country that specializes in cleaning exteriors of buildings, homes and other industrial structures using technology and know-how originally from the United States.

In a little over a year, Pristine Pressure Cleaning Inc has cleaned residential homes, condominiums, fast food chains, gasoline stations, buildings and industrial complexes. The company's list of satisfied clients include Petron Gas Stations, Dunkin Donuts, Tantuco Oil Company, and LGI Building.

The company offers free demos to give your homes a fresh makeover. Call Tony at 400-7819, or fax 633-2905, and ask for your free demo.

DRAWING CONTEST WINNERS

Sacred Heart School, the pioneer of the Kumon method of teaching in the country, recently held its annual on-the-spot Christmas card drawing contest at the Shangri-La Mall. Shown during the awarding are winners (from left, first row) Maria T. Enna Alegre of Antonio Regidor Elementary School, John Patrick B. Eala of Colegio de San Agustin, Beatrice Ti Mata So of Immaculate Conception Academy, Ian Katsoshi P. Terano of St. Alphonsus Elementary School, and first placers Timothy Joshua R. Haynes of Don Bosco Technical School and Jennifer J. Cruz of Padre Gomez Elementary School. At the 2nd row are judges (3rd from left) art educator Don Amorsolo, veteran journalist Deedee Siytangco, coin designer Yanni Rumbaoa, Chinese brush painter and chair of the judging committee Susan Fetalvero-Roces and PWU college dean Rosario Bitanga. Beside them are Rowena J. Matti and Christine Gloria, Sacred Heart School directress. The first place winning entries became the school's official Christmas card design for 2003.

Powerhaus Media launches new website

POWERHAUS Media Professionals, one of the leading frontrunners in the local public relations consultancy industry, recently launched its new website http://powerhausmedia.blogspot.com.

In a statement, company president Mari Leah Bartolome says the website is an excellent venue for its clientele as global information vehicle on the latest and updated services being offered by the company as it continues to give effective media marketing strategies with the use of broadcast and print media for information delivery services and good publicity for its clients.

She added that with the company's cooperative relationship with its wide network of print and broadcast media relations group in the local business market, the organizational team works to ensure the effective delivery of PR and media marketing strategies and services for its clients.

The company, in its five years of existence, has given media services and effective information delivery for clients to reach their respective target markets, marketing the clients' products, special projects and events, orientations, seminars, conventions and exhibitions-all provided by the company with its media access to TV and radio broadcast, and print media.

As the company enters its sixth year, Bartolome added that Powerhaus is also promoting its "free advertisement" for new clients via public service announcements on radio broadcast in FM and AM as added free perks for media campaigns. Call 935-8533 or 0919-4040403.

The company has accomplished media campaign projects for clients that include Speechpower Inc, American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), Insam Corp, Green and Gold International Exports, Moissanite Philippines, Makati Eye Laser Center, Scholes International Immigration Services, Education Direct (formerly International Correspondence Schools), Prima Care Development and Training Center, Andrew Pineda Hair Clinics, and Maple Leaf Training Center.

MAX'S RESTAURANT BAGS QUALITY AWARD

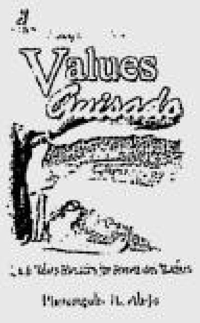
Max's Franchising Inc was chosen as 2003 National Consumers Quality Awardee under Top Innovative Specialty Restaurant-Business Venture Concept-Franchising Category. The award was given by the 2003 National Consumers Quality Awards Committee jointly with the National Consumer Affairs Foundation (NCAF) in view of the company's significant contribution to the well-being of consumers. Shown is MFI chief operating officer Robert Ocampo (3rd from left) receiving the trophy from NCAF officials.

Maldita Salamats Sale up to Jan. 15!

THE HOLIDAY cheers is not yet over at Maldita! As a way of saying "Thank You" to all of its loyal customers, Maldita is conducting a "Maldita Salamats Sale!" up to Jan. 15. Avail yourself of huge discounts on apparel and fashion accessories. Don't miss this New Year treat from your favorite ladies' apparel boutique. Maldita won three major consumers' awards in 2003, making it a top choice of fashionistas. Maldita is located in all SM, Robinsons and Ayala Malls.

ProductFILES

'Values Guisado' 'sizzles'



RESPONDING to teachers' and parents' need for a clear and comprehensive values education handbook on effectively developing values among students, SIBS Publishing House, in cooperation with Parents for Education Foundation (Paref) Northfield Private School for Boys Quezon City, launches "Values Guisado: Learning to Love, Loving to Learn-Q&A Values Education for Parents and Teachers". The book was formally launched Oct. 2.

The book employs the spiral approach in teaching the macro values of personal unity, family unity, universal charity, and community unity. Among its instructional media are collaborative activities, thought-provoking commentaries, informative question-and-answer sections, inspiring quotations, and easy-to-use tools for assessment of values acquisition. "Values Guisado" is available in hardbound and paperback editions, which costs P650 and P150 per copy, respectively.

For more information, get in touch with SIBS Publishing House at 687-6164 and 687-3505.

SM MAKATI CELEBRATES 28TH YEAR

SM Makati recently celebrated its 28th anniversary with its theme 'Into the Future'. A luncheon was held at the 2nd floor, followed by an awarding of employees with their respective years of service. The awards were given by Consuelo C. Monasterio, Rosauro Oquialda, branch manager, and Gloria Gonzales. The awarding was also graced by Eliseo P. Cardenas, general manager of Ayala Center Association.

Singapore voted best business city

SINGAPORE has been voted the Best Business City in the World for the third year running by readers of the Business Traveller Asia-Pacific magazine.

Singapore came out tops in the Best Business City category in the annual poll of the magazine's subscribers, comprising frequent travelers based mostly in the Asia-Pacific region. This is the third time that Singapore has clinched this honor, having been voted the magazine's favorite business city in 2001 and 2002.

Singapore also swept the polls in the other major categories this year. Singapore Airlines was voted the world's best airline, while Singapore Changi Airport claimed the world best airport title. The magazine's readers also picked the Shangri-La Singapore as the best business hotel in the world, while The Fullerton Singapore was voted the best new business hotel in the Asia-Pacific region.

MOVEMENTS

Balangue new SGV chair

BALANGUE

DAVID L. Balangue succeeds Cesar V. Purisima as chair and managing partner of SGV & Co. Purisima had accepted earlier President Macapagal-Arroyo's invitation to be the Secretary of Trade and Industry.

A partner for the past 21 years, Balangue has been vice chair and deputy managing partner of SGV & Co. since 1999.

Balangue holds a Master in Management degree, with distinction, from the Graduate School of Management of Northwestern University where he was an SGV scholar and recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award.

He earned his bachelor's degree in commerce, magna cum laude, from the Manuel L. Quezon University. He placed second in the 1971 CPA board examinations and joined SGV in the same year. He worked in the SGV Group's Korea office for eight years.

Balangue is an active member of professional groups. He was recently elected executive vice president for 2004 of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (Picpa) and of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (Finex). He was governor and vice president of the Management Association of the Philippines in 2003. He is chair of the Standing Interpretations Committee of the Accounting Standards Council and chair of the Philippines-Korea Economic Council. As chair of SGV & Co., he also succeeds Purisima as president of the Board of Trustees of the SGV Foundation.

Cirilo P. Noel is the new vice chair and deputy managing partner.

Amelia B. Cabal is vice chair for financial markets; Roman Felipe S. Reyes for industries; and Luis Y. Benitez for assurance services.

SGV & Co. is the largest professional services firm in the Philippines with 1,600 employees in nine offices across the country. It is the only ISO-certified auditing firm in the Philippines since 1996.

Stanchart has new finance exec

PARLADE

UK-BASED Standard Chartered Bank recently announced the appointment of Caesar O.V. "Boboy" Parlade as the head of Finance. This senior appointment brings Boboy to the Bank's Management Committee, which is now a balance of five Filipinos and five foreign nationals.

Boboy brings with him 23 years of vast experience in financial management. Prior to his SCB post, Boboy was the comptroller of Deutsche Bank AG, Manila. He was with the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. as executive vice president, where he was part of the senior management team responsible for restructuring PDIC and recapitalizing the Deposit Insurance Fund.

Other details in Boboy's credentials include being a director of the Eastern Telecommunications Inc.; Commissioner of the Presidential Commission on Good Government; and director for corporate finance and audit supervisor of Sycip Gorres and Velayo.

Boboy was a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow in Banking at Boston University. He finished his postgraduate studies with a Diploma in Financial Management at the Netherlands International Institute of Management. Boboy is a product of the College of Business Administration of the University of the Philippines.

Growing too fast is not always a good idea

From page B2-1

are tempted to diversify, integrate, or increase volume

- Before committing your firm and its resources to growth, see what you can accomplish without making massive changes. For instance, instead of relocating to a larger site, see if you can organize your current space more efficiently.
- If your firm is deluged with so many new customers and clients, be selective. It is better to refer business to another firm than do a mediocre job.
- Reduce advertising and keep a low profile until you're ready to expand operations.
- Consider asking customers for a deposit that covers 50 percent of your production costs. Your cash flow will increase and non-committed customers will step aside.
- Avoid overworking your people. When they have to do too much too fast, their judgment is impaired and the stage is set for mistakes and poor decisions.
- Avoid overworking yourself. You should learn to delegate responsibility, utilizing temporary help if necessary.
- Consult another entrepreneur who has survived growing pains and can offer sound advice.

(For UP ISSI training and publications programs, call Tel. 928-7076 to 79 or e-mail info.issi@up.edu.ph)

RR-12-2003: Banks make a killing, borrowers get killed by VAT

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Manuel Alcuaz

CONSIDER the situation of a small borrower with a long term housing loan. His capacity to pay has already been stretched to the limit and all of a sudden BIR's Revenue Regulation 12-2003 imposes a 10 percent VAT on interest charged by financing institutions on the loan.

Or consider the burden of a credit card holder that has already been paying the credit card company a usurious rate of 3.5 percent per month on his unpaid balance and now receives notice that he must pay an additional 10 percent of 3.5 percent or a total of 3.85 percent. That is 57.35 percent per year!

For our country to progress and develop it must build up a strong middle class. But unreasonable interest rates and taxes are killing the middle class.

In the Philippines, the poor workers get poorer, the rich, the politicians, and the corrupt get richer!

The principle of VAT is to tax all sales a fixed amount regardless of how many transactions have taken place from miner, fishermen, or farmer, thru middlemen, manufacturers and processors, distributors and wholesalers, and finally retailers.

In the Philippines the VAT tax component that the final customer pays is 1/11 of the price of the goods and/or services he buys.

The 10 percent VAT is shared by all the parties in the value chain. This sharing is effected by the computation of output tax and input tax.

The output tax is 1/11 of the selling price of goods and services. However, a taxpayer who buys goods and services (not salaries) can compute an input tax of 1/11 of the purchases he has made.

Thus, if you sell P110 worth and buy P88 worth your output VAT is P10 and your input VAT is P8. The VAT you have to remit to BIR is only P2 (P10-P8).

VAT is good if properly implemented because:

1. it encourages subcontracting
2. it makes taxpayers along the chain help BIR collect

In the past, instead of VAT there was a sales tax. The sales tax could range from 3 percent to 7 percent. Every time there is a transaction you pay 3 to 7 percent sales tax. If you have a chain of about 5 the tax (if paid) could easily reach over 15 percent.

With VAT the total tax cannot be more than 10%. The government also hoped that everyone would pay along the way. Because to claim your input tax deduction you must have VAT receipts.

In a society with many corrupt officials and crooked businessmen things don't work as expected.

The banks and financial institutions have for many years fought off VAT and have enjoyed exemption from VAT.

They have finally accepted VAT because they have found a way to make more money with VAT. In effect they have passed the entire burden of the ten percent VAT to their borrowers and customers.

They tell us that BIR has directed them to pass the 10 percent VAT to us. and as "consuelo de bobo" they tell us that if we pay output VAT we can use the VAT on interest as input VAT.

However, the banks have conveniently failed to tell us that:

1. 1. The GRT tax which was already included in the interest they charged has been removed. This is at least 3 percent they save!
2. 2. The banks also have input VAT that they claim as a deduction. This could amount to at least 60 percent of the fees and interest that they charge.

Thus the banks have made a killing.

- They no longer pay 3 percent GRT.
- They collect 10 percent from borrowers and customers.
- But they only remit 4 percent to the BIR.

Thus banks are now making about 9 percent more profit thanks to RR-12-2003.

As my religious friends would say, "God forgive them for they know not what they do."

(The author is President of Systems Sciences Consult, Inc. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

Tax evasion a way of life, death in the Philippines

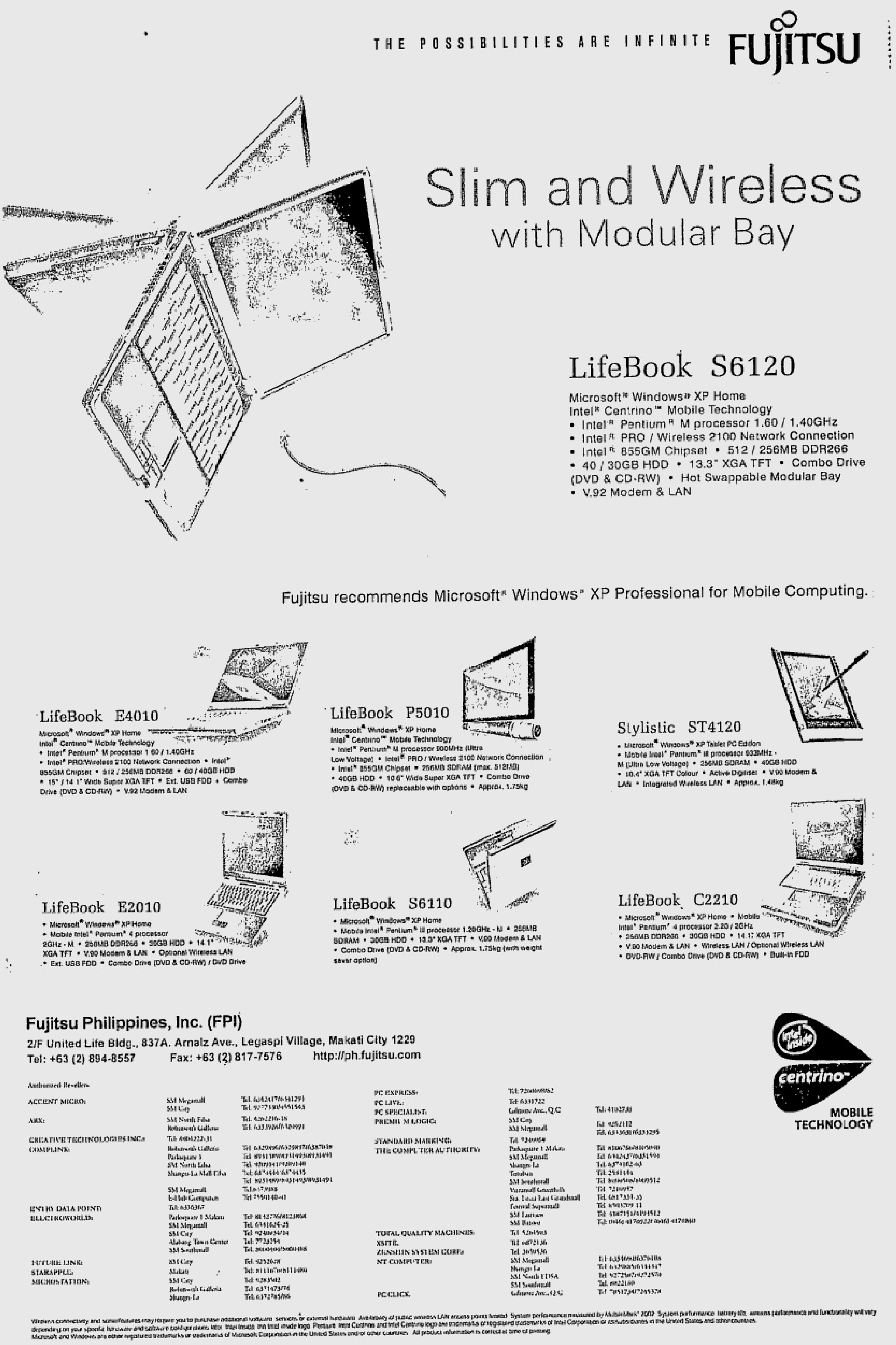
From page B2-1

their jobs, something that guarantees heavy resistance from the politically well-connected agency as next May's national elections approach.

"They have connections all over who serve to protect them, and I'm talking of people even in Congress," said Bacalla.

"As far as the bill is concerned, the picture is not very positive, to say the least."

Reuters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• V.92 Modem & LAN

Fujitsu recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional for Mobile Computing.

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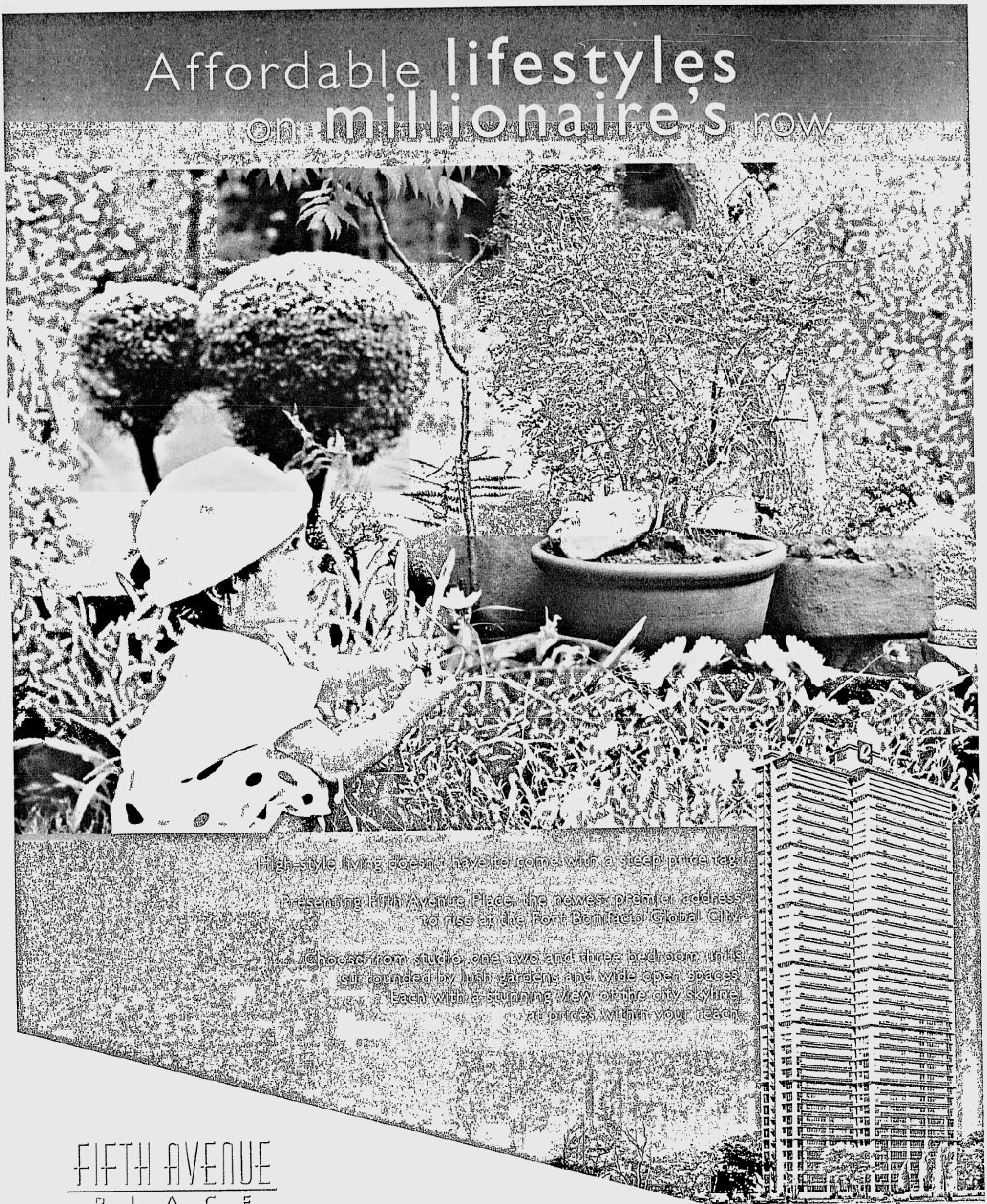

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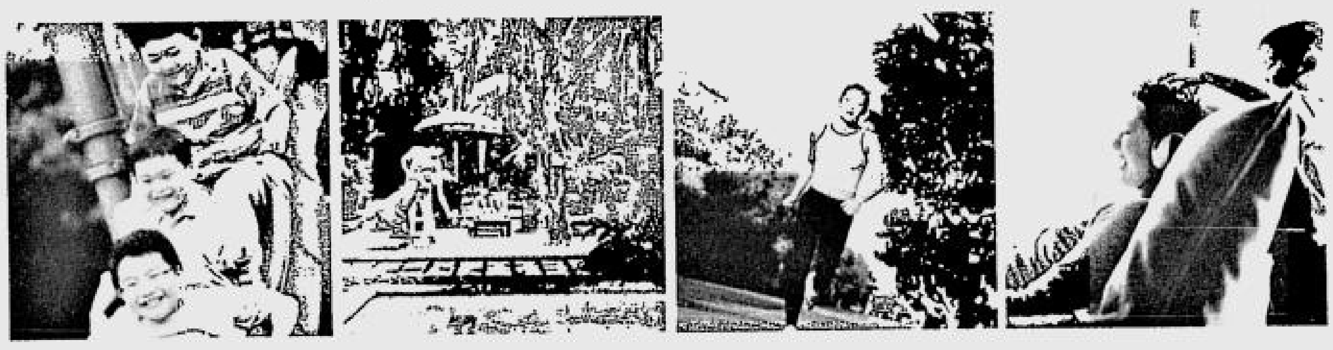

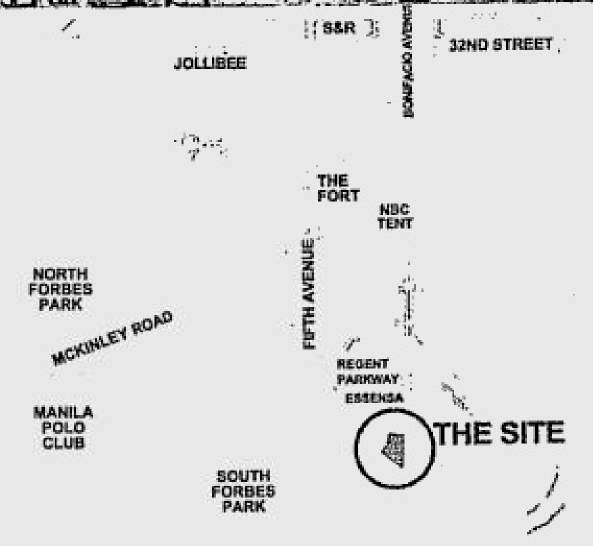
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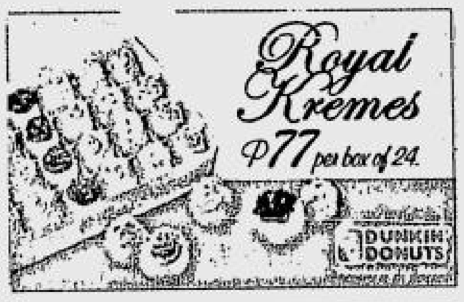

Grand and glorious beyond belief

SAURON'S legions prepare to overrun Gondor.

By Gibbs Cadiz

I T is true what you've heard so far of "Lord Of The Rings: The Return of the King." It is a stupendous piece of filmmaking that fulfills and amplifies the promise of its two great predecessors.

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But only "The Godfather 1" and "The Godfather 2" are true classics; the third installment is a flawed ending to the trilogy.

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Part of the thrill of watching "The Lord of the Rings" unfold on our movie screens for the last three years is the realization that cinematic history is being made with this trilogy.

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Like the yolk-skinned, emotionally expressive Gollum, even this spider has character. In its horrible clicking stride you sense the weight of ancient lonely evenings in that cave. And for bringing the saga to its most heart-stopping moment, it gets rewarded not with death, but with a wound it can survive.

Always, always, a headlong galloping to shattering moments, to scenes of sustained mayhem and heroism the authentic likes of which we haven't seen in movies in a long time, only for Jackson to scale back, slowly ride the

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THE SIGHT of Mumakil, eight-story beasts of war, is awesome.

ARAGORN (Viggo Mortensen), ascendant king of Gondor, leading his troops to battle

THE TORTURED Frodo (Elijah Wood) nearing the end of his suicidal quest

LEGOLAS (Orlando Bloom) rampages beautifully.

> 'The Return of the King' is a stupendous piece of filmmaking that fulfills and amplifies the promise of its two great predecessors

Mag-merienda
Araw-araw!

HenySison

THE ESSENTIAL BAKING AND PASTRY SERIES: This 26-day hands-on class will cover the basics of pastry, desserts, bread baking, as well as cake decorating. It is suitable for those seeking an entry-level position in pastry shop, hotel or restaurant. Classes begin on **January 15- March 13, 2004.** Classes are held every **Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays** from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

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Sign up now to secure your spots for the class fills up quickly. Tuition fee includes ingredients, manual, aprons, chef's jacket and chef's kit. For more information calll **7265316 and 4127792** and ask for Lirio or Rita.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

January 9 (Friday) 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Classroom A) BASIC CAKES & ICINGS FOR BEGINNERS by: Heny Sison, P1,500 *Butter Cake w Butter Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake w/ Fudge Icing, Mocha Cake w/ No Melt Butter Icing, Lemon Chiffon Cake w/ Boiled Icing & Sponge Cake w/ Whipped Cream Icing

January 9 (Friday) 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. (Classroom A) QUICK BREADS by: Heny Sison, P1,500 * Apple Walnut Cake, Banana Nut Bread, Zucchini Bread, Apple Cinnamon Muffins, Dark Moist Bran Muffins and Carrot Muffins

January 9 (Friday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DOUGHNUT WORKSHOP, by: Chef Jane Paredes, Food Consultant, co-owner of Cafe simply desserts, trained at the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York and Peter Kump's New York Cooking School P2,500 Recipes: Sugar Honey-Glazed, Caramel Pecan, Chocolate Nut, Mango Glazed, Chocolate Bavarian, Blueberry Filled, Strawberry Filled, Apple Filled, Twist Cinnamon Sugar & Beignets (French Doughnuts)

January 10 (Saturday) 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) BROWNIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique, Food Consultant, & Food Stylist, Blue Ribbon graduate of Peter Kump's New York Cooking School P2,500 *Fudgy Brownies, Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Blondies, Chocolate Chip Walnut Bars, Cappuccino Brownies, Butterscotch Brownies, Marbled Cream Cheese Brownies, Fruit & Nut Bars & White Chocolate Brownies

January 10 (Saturday) 10:00 a.m -5:00 p.m. (Classroom B) PIZZA CLASS WORKSHOP by: Giorgio Bucciarelli, Master Pizzaiolo & Barista, Food Consultant of various Italian restaurants all over Metro Manila, graduated at Culinary Institute, Milan, Italy P2,500 * In this class you will learn the history, concept and design of pizza making. Learn how to make pizza dough, tomato base sauce, white sauce base, preparation, set up pizza counter, know the ingredients and toppings Recipes: Margherita, Napoli Classica, 4 Formaggi, Pizza Vegetariana, La Gitana, Piccantina, 4 Stagioni, Calzone & Frutti di Mare **Demonstration with student participation.**

January 12 (Monday) 9:00 a.m -4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) BAKING I by: Heny Sison P1,500 * Super Moist Chocolate Cake with Mocha Filling & Fudge Frosting, Crispy Sylvana, Cream Puff, Lemon Pie, Butterscotch Bars and Sablés

January 12 (Monday) 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DIMSUM I by: Chef Katherine Sion, restaurateur (Ding Hao & Fat Kat restaurant), caterer & an expert in Chinese cuisine P1,500 *Congee, Siomai, Dumpling, Chicken Feet, Fried Shrimp Ball and Buchi

January 13 (Tuesday) 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (Classroom A) SPECIAL COURSE ON COOKIES by: Heny Sison, P1,500 *Chocolate Chip Cookies, Jam Thumbprint, Peanut Butter Cookies, Lemon Bars, Chocolate Cups, Oatmeal and Chocolate Crinkles

January 13 (Tuesday) 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) COFFEE! COFFEE! COFFEE! by: Chef Alleen Anastacio, owner of Goodies N' Sweet Bakeshop & C'est Si Bon, Dean's list graduate of culinary at the California Culinary Academy **P1,500** *If you are planning to open a coffee shop this course is for you. Learn the four fundamentals of coffee brewing, home espresso, guide to steaming & foaming. **Recipes:** Caffé Latte, Caffé Mocha, Caffé Americano, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato & Espresso Con Panna. Make fun toppings & garnishes & master the art of coffee making.

January 13 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DIMSUM II by: Chef Katherine Sion, P1,500 *Steamed Pork spareribs in Tausi Sauce, Chicken Siomai, Sharksfin Siomai, Two Colors Siomai, Wanton Mami and Egg Tart

January 14 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) CHEESECAKE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique, P 2,000 * No Frills Cheesecake, New York Cheesecake, Alsatian Cheesecake, Italian Ricotta Cheesecake, Triple Chocolate Cheesecake & Easy Oreo Cheesecake

January 14 (Wednesday) 1:00-5:00 p.m. (Classroom B) THE MANY WAYS TO COOK CHICKEN by: Chef Alleen Anastacio, P 1,700 *Citrus - Ginger Grilled Chicken, Chicken Cacciatore, Chicken Inasal, Thai Style Grilled Chicken, Roasted Chicken with Lemon, Garlic & Rosemary, Buffalo Wings & Chicken Bulgogi

January 15 (Thursday) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) SPECIAL CAKES by: Heny Sison, P1,500 Recipes: * Coffee Crunch, Tiramisu, Black Forest Cake, Nelusco, Mocha Cake with Mocha Filling & Icing and Rum Walnut Cake

January 16 (Friday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) HOMEMADE SAUSAGES, CONDIMENTS & MARINADE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jane Paredes, P2,500 *Discover ways to transform meat, poultry & seafood into Profitable menu items **SAUSAGES:** Chorizo Bilbao, Longanisa Ilongga, Italian Sausage, Seafood Sausage & Mexican Sausage; **CONDIMENTS:** Honey Mustard Sauce, Sweet Pickles Chips & Atchara **MARINADE:** Homemade Tapa, Homemade Bulgogi & Tocino **DISHES:** Sausage, Sauerkraut & Potato Casserole & Country Style Pork & Beans

January 17 (Saturday) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) SECRETS NO MORE! by: Heny Sison, P3,000 *Decadent Chocolate Cake w/ Fudge Icing & Caramel Sauce, Lemon Torte, Ensaymada, Almond Sanzrival, Strawberry Shortcake & Ube Cake

January 19-23, 26-30 (Mon.-Fri.) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) MASTER IN CAKE DECORATION / BASIC by: Heny Sison, P 16,000 * A two-week practical basic cake decorating designed for shop owner, teacher, baker, chef and enthusiast. Includes fancy borders, over 20 icing flowers, color flow, method of printing and script, sugar molding, flower bunching, figure piping, decorated cookies, birthday & wedding cake assembly. **Full participation.**

January 19 (Monday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BULAKENA FAVORITES by: Chef Carol Acosta, Food Consultant to multinational food companies and restaurants. **P 1,500** *Sweet Rolls with Custard Filling, Special Ensamaditas, Cheesy Cupcake, Mini Banana-Walnut Loaf, Apple Strudel with Phyllo, Orange Liqueured Cake and Manticao (Cinnamon Mini Loaf Cake)

January 20 (Tuesday) 10:00-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BASIC BREAD BAKING WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique, P 2,500 * Ham & Cheese Muffins, Olive Muffins, Walnut Bread, Carrot Loaf, Rye Bread, Dinner Rolls & Focaccia

January 21 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BASIC FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS by: Glenn Remorca, floral designer **P 2,500** *Learn the theories, styles, trends, techniques, sourcing, flower care & maintenance, basic form, arrangement and flower for weddings. **Lecture, demonstration and hands-on production. Bring a pair of scissors.**

January 26 (Monday) 1:00-5:30 p.m. (Classroom B) JAPANESE COOKING I (All Time Favorite Japanese Recipes) by: Chef Koichi Kondo, Licensed cook from Ehime, Japan and food consultant to various Japanese restaurants **P 1,700** * Miso Soup, Tempura, Nimono, Yakimono, California Maki, Chilled Soba, Noodles with Nori, Skewered Dumplings with Brown Sauce

January 31 (Saturday) 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) TAPAS 1 by: Chef Ed Quimson, P 2,500 is a seasoned master chef of Spanish origin, creator of RASTRO Tapas Bar & Restaurant at Rockwell. He has also lent his expertise to such restaurants as La Tasca, Via Mare, The Nielsen Tower, the Member's Lounge of the Phil. Stock Exchange & the Subic Yacht Club Croquettas: Chicken, Tuna & Cheese, Croquettas de Paella Negra, Potato & Anchovy, Gambas, Tortilla de Patata, Samosa Timapa filled w/ Green Mango & Cheese, Pimientos Aliñadas (toasted red bell pepper marinated in olive oil & garlic), Salpicao, Batido de Salmon (whipped cheese & salmon mousse). **Full participation.**

TUITION FEE includes ingredients. Reservation is required **WEDDING CAKE & BIRTHDAY CAKE** orders by appointment only. We sell cake decorating, confectionery and baking supplies.

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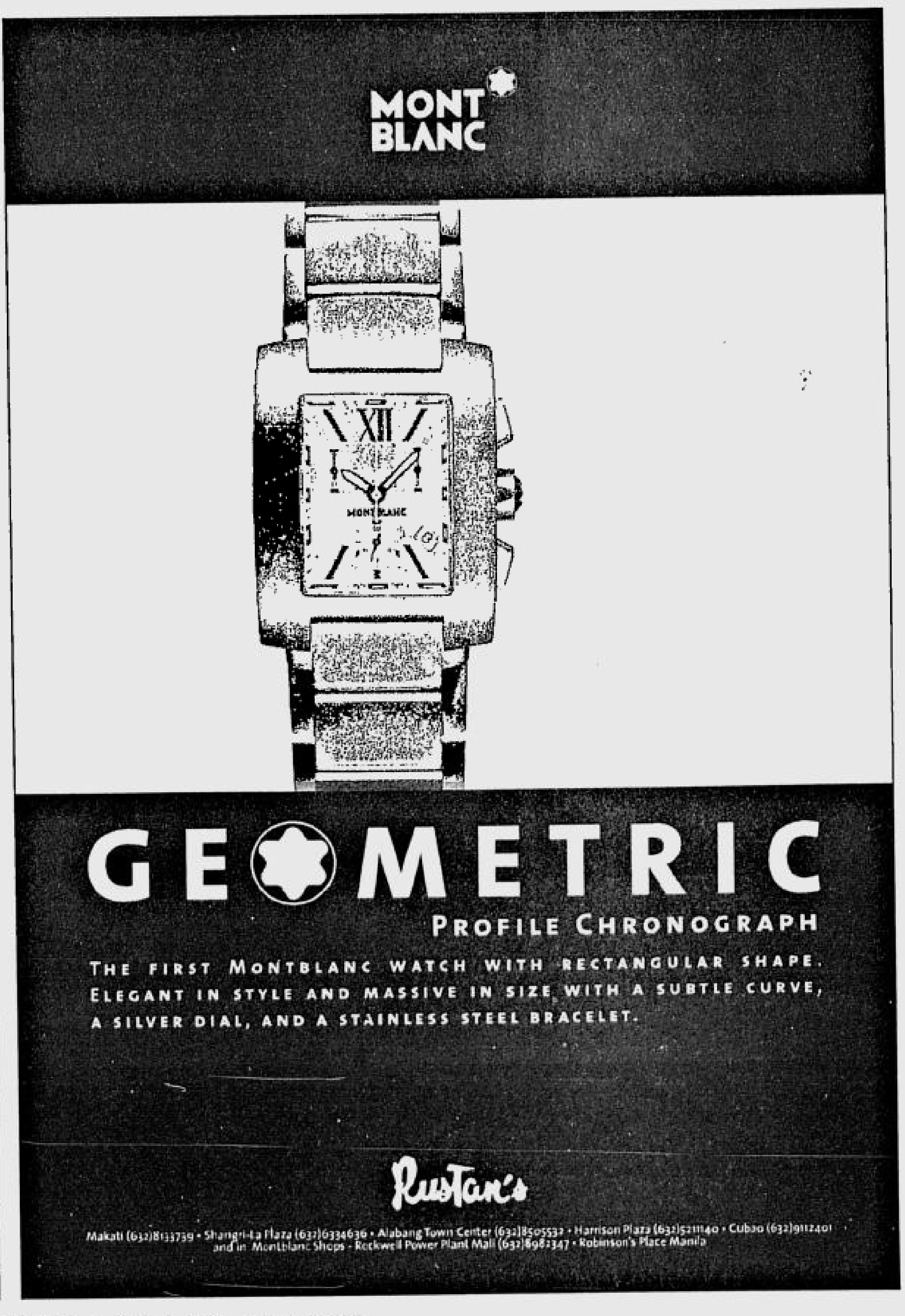
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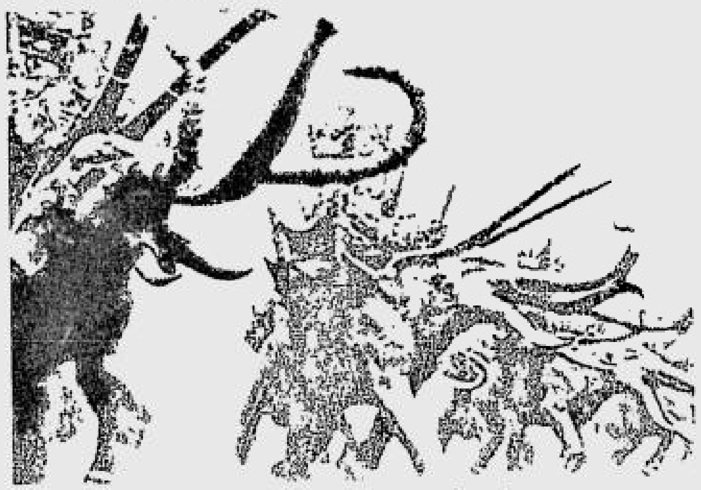
Grand and glorious beyond belief

SAURON'S legions prepare to overrun Gondor.



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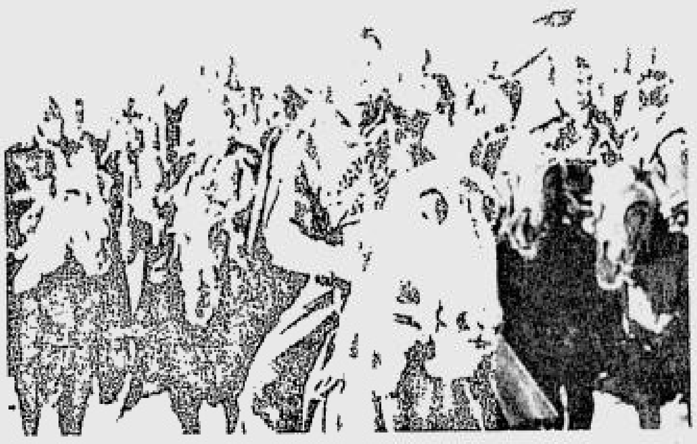

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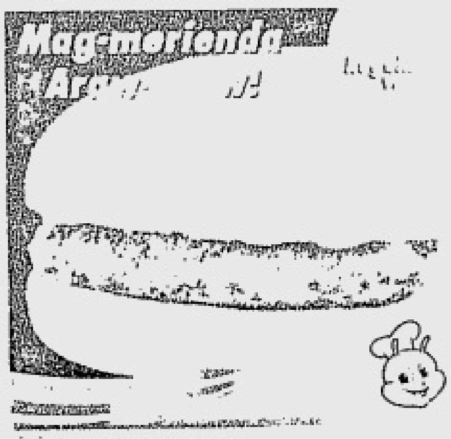

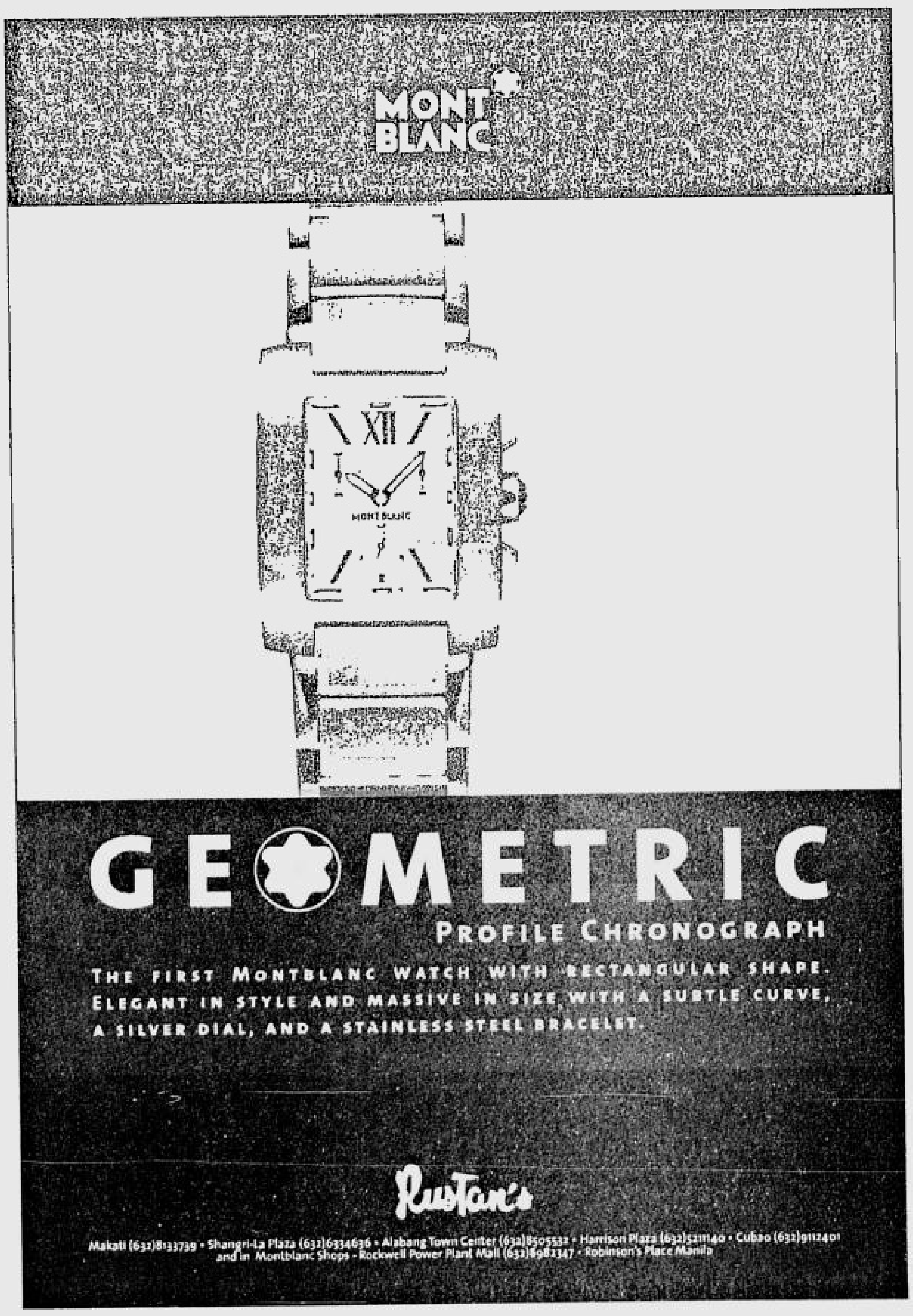
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January 9 (Friday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DOUGHNUT WORKSHOP by: Chef Jane Paredes. [illegible] P2,500 Recipes: [illegible]

January 10 (Saturday) 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) BROWNIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique. [illegible] P2,500 "Fudgy Brownies, Chocolate Chip [illegible] Butterscotch Brownies [illegible]

January 10 (Saturday) 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Classroom B) PIZZA CLASS WORKSHOP by: Giorgio Buccarelli. [illegible] P2,500 [illegible] Recipes: Margherita [illegible] Demonstration with student participation.

January 12 (Monday) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) BAKING I by: Heny Sison P1,500 [illegible] Butterscotch Bars [illegible]

January 12 (Monday) 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DIMSUM I by: Chef Katherine Sison. [illegible] P1,500 "Congee, Siomai, Dumplings [illegible]

January 13 (Tuesday) 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (Classroom A) SPECIAL COURSE ON COOKIES by: Heny Sison P1,500 [illegible] Peanut Butter Cookies, Lemon Bars, Chocolate [illegible]

January 13 (Tuesday) 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) COFFEE! COFFEE! COFFEE! by: Chef Aileen Anastacio. [illegible] Academy P1,500 [illegible] Recipes: [illegible] Caffe Mocha [illegible] Espresso Macchiato & Espresso Con Panna. Make fun toppings & garnishes & master the art of coffee making.

January 13 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) DIMSUM II by: Chef Katherine Sison. P1,500 [illegible] and Egg Tart

January 14 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) CHEESECAKE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique P 2,000 [illegible] Ricotta Cheesecake [illegible]

January 14 (Wednesday) 1:00-5:00 p.m. (Classroom B) THE MANY WAYS TO COOK CHICKEN by: Chef Aileen Anastacio. P 1,700 [illegible] Chicken Inasal Thai Style [illegible] Roasted Chicken with Lemon [illegible] Buffalo Wings & Chicken Bulgogi

January 15 (Thursday) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) SPECIAL CAKES by: Heny Sison. P1,500 Recipes: [illegible] Black Forest Cake [illegible] Rum Walnut [illegible]

January 16 (Friday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) HOMEMADE SAUSAGES, CONDIMENTS & MARINADE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jane Paredes. P2,500 [illegible] SAUSAGES [illegible] CONDIMENTS: Honey Mustard Sauce [illegible] & Atchara MARINADE: Homemade Tapa, Homemade Bulgogi & Tocino DISHES: Sausage [illegible] & Potato Casserole & Country Style Pork & Beans

January 17 (Saturday) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) SECRETS NO MORE! by: Heny Sison. P3,000 [illegible] Fudge Icing & Caramel Sauce, Lemon Torte, Ensaymada, Almond Sansrival, Strawberry Shortcake & Ube Cake

January 19-23, 26-30 (Mon.-Fri.) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) MASTER IN CAKE DECORATION BASIC by: Heny Sison. P 16,000 [illegible] Full participation.

January 19 (Monday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BULAKENA FAVORITES by: Chef Carol Acosta. [illegible] P 1,500 [illegible] Banana Walnut Loaf, Apple Strudel with Phyllo [illegible]

January 20 (Tuesday) 10:00-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BASIC BREAD BAKING WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique. P 2,500 [illegible] Walnut Bread [illegible] Rye Bread [illegible]

January 21 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom B) BASIC FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS by: Glenn Remorca. [illegible] P 2,500 [illegible] for weddings. Lecture, demonstration and hands-on production. Bring a pair of scissors

January 26 (Monday) 1:00-5:30 p.m. (Classroom B) JAPANESE COOKING (All Time Favorite Japanese Recipes) by: Chef Koichi Kondo [illegible] P 1,700 [illegible] California Maki [illegible] Soba Noodles with [illegible]

January 31 (Saturday) 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) TAPAS 1 by: Chef Ed Quimson. P 2,500 [illegible] creator of RASTRO Tapas Bar & Restaurant at Rockwell. [illegible] Full participation.

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SEAN Astin as Frodo's loyal companion Samwise Gamgee gives a ferociously touching performance.

ARWEN (Liv Tyler) suffers exquisitely, torn between the pull of immortality and her all-too-human love for Aragorn.

MORE mischief from Gollum (Andy Serkis), who turns from quirkily endearing to menacing in the end

Grand and glorious beyond belief

From page C1

crest to more intimate, heartbreaking codas.

As when a deranged Denethor (John Noble) sends his one remaining son, Faramir (David Wenham), to certain death while he gorges on fruit and basks in a mournful dirge sung by Pippin (Billy Boyd).

The soundless sight of the beleaguered warriors hurtling to their deaths stabs at the heart—and makes for the film's most transcendental moment.

Pale shadow

The characters have grown spectacularly into their roles. Elijah Wood as Frodo is a pale shadow of his happy Shire self, tortured by the corruptive powers of the ring.

Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) is now every inch a king, regal in his fortitude, and while his battle speech may not be Henry V's St. Crispian's Day exhortation by any stretch, Mortensen invests his ascendant monarch with galvanizing nobility.

Sean Astin, too, as Sam, delivers a performance worthy of commendation. That tender moment when Frodo collapses and gives up hope just yards away from the mouth of Mount Doom, only for Sam to declare, "Once and for all... I can't carry it (the ring), but I can carry you!" and then proceeds to heave Frodo on to his shoulders like Aeneas carrying his father Anchises out of burning Rome, is touching beyond belief.

Ian McKellen as the stalwart Gandalf, Bernard Hill as King Theoden and Miranda Otto as Eowyn (fierce, lovely and deserving of her own soaring moment in the battlefield) round up the dream cast. This is simply the most seamless ensemble work in a movie of this magnitude in years.

A bittersweet, autumnal air pervades "The Return of the King." It's as if Jackson and his team had wrapped the film in the elegiac sentiments they must have felt now that their epic project was about to end.

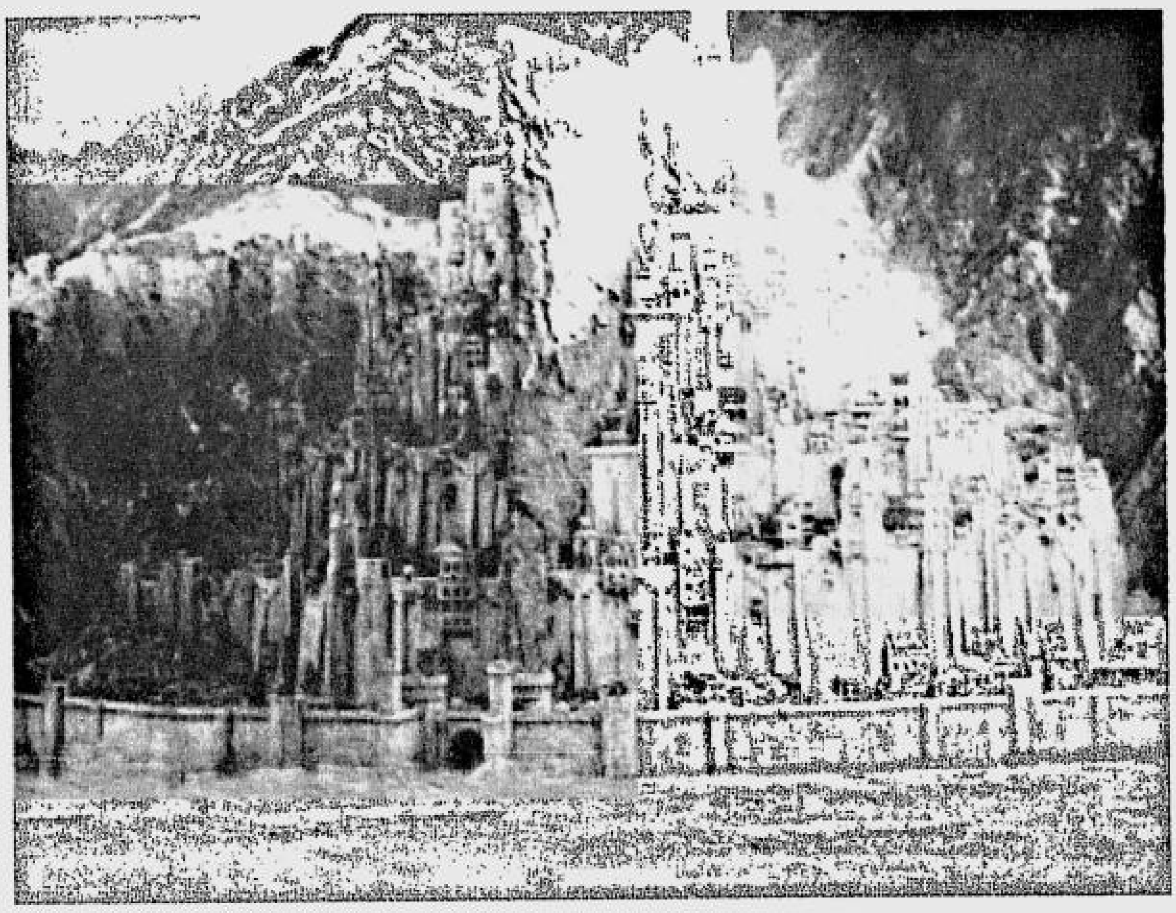
Like the Age of Men that dawned with the defeat of Sauron and the ascension of Aragorn to the throne of Gondor, the post-"Rings" days would be a time of sadness and ambivalence, a return to a grown-up world without the magic of wizards and the loveliness of elves.

New Year in these parts would certainly not be the same without a new Tolkien installment thrilling the very marrow of our bones.

But for the three years of cinematic glory that restored our belief in the essential grace and purity of mainstream movie entertainment, that redeemed a perennially bastardized genre and made it fresh again for our battered sensibilities, and that reanimated Tolkien's work with heroic passion and fidelity—thank you, Peter Jackson and company.

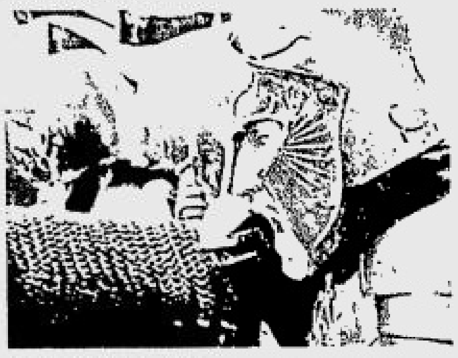
We are eternally grateful.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer. com.ph



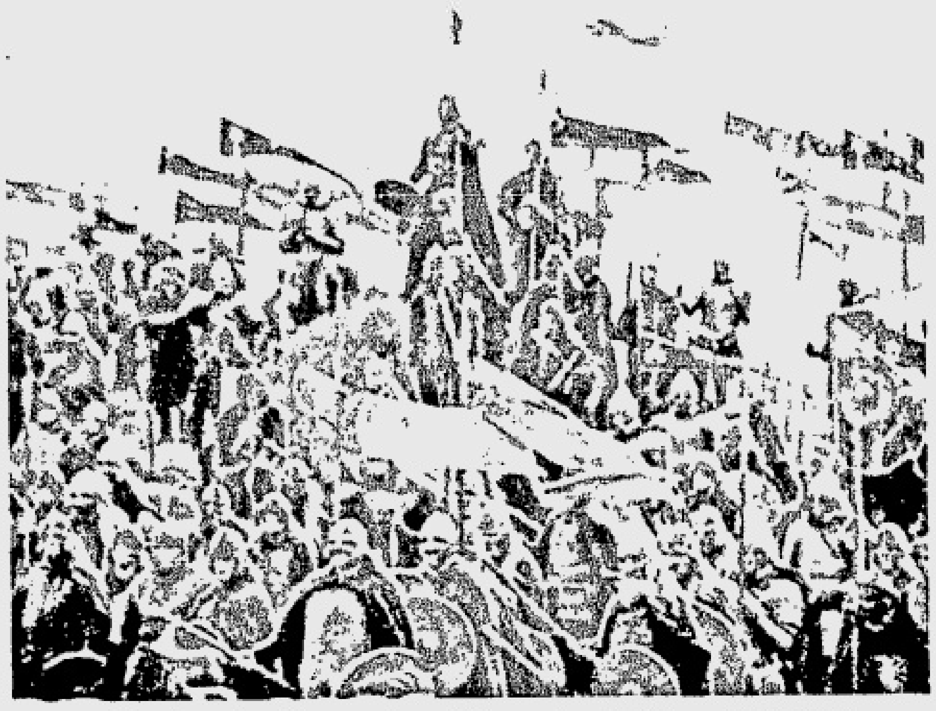
MINAS Tirith, city of kings, capital of Gondor

KING Theoden (Bernard Hill) of the horsey realm of Rohan



FARAMIR (David Wenham) charges to a quixotic last defense of the ruined city of Osgiliath, right outside the gates of Gondor.

HONOR, courage, sacrifice and heroism to save Middle Earth



THE ROHIRRIM, tough and flinty warriors of Rohan, gather to join forces with the last defenders of the city.

Mag:Net presents yearend exhibit

MAG:NET Gallery presents its yearend exhibition, "X-mas," which opened last Dec. 22 at its Makati site (G/F, Paseo Center, cor. Paseo de Roxas and Sedeno St.). Curated by Nilo Ilarde, the show brings together small-scale works of the gallery's resident artists.

The various possibilities of Philippine contemporary abstraction are represented in Alvin Villaruel's blurred optical experiments, Lito Carating's and Antonio Daroy's incorporation of geometric patterns, Bernardo Pacquing's use of spontaneous and primitive-derived imagery, as well as Popo San Pascual's and Pardo de Leon's different experiments with texture and patterns. Blurred boundaries between figurative and abstract elements are displayed in the works of Roy Veneracion, Maria Taniguchi and Jack Sotto.

Installation works are included, such as Gerry Tan's TV set featuring footage of a traditional *parol* lantern hung from the gallery ceiling, Poklong's painting lit from behind, and Roberto Chabet's clipboard-and-twine composition.

Social realist Neil Doloricon's "Pieta" and "Sisa," apart from taking on vastly different techniques from the artist's former photorealistic approach, manifest thematic parallelisms in his depictions of agony in traditional religious iconography and Philippine colonial allegories. Abstractionist Nestor Vinluan features works from his previous series using space, shadow and gesture.

Social satire and allegory, meanwhile, find tongue-in-cheek expression in works such as Manuel Ocampo's "Strength Through Joy," Louie Cordero's "Guided by Trosos" and Fernando Modesto's "Madonna and Child," which wryly uses images of the pop icon in place of the sacred virgin. Pablo Biglang-awa and Pete Jimenez do their takes on contemporary pop and consumer culture.

Emerging art is represented by Patty Eustaquio's uses of repetitive figurative elements to create abstract translucencies, MM Yu's demonstration of binary elements in "Accord" and "Discord," Gary Ross Pastrana's experiments with minimalist geometries and Yasmin Sison's "Pop Year."

The show also features ceramic and stoneware pieces by Monique Agatep-Ignacio, Hadrian Mendoza and Pete Cortes. Works such as Hadrian Mendoza's "Bamboo Slice" stand as innovations in sculptural idioms and forms.

"X-mas" runs until Jan. 17.

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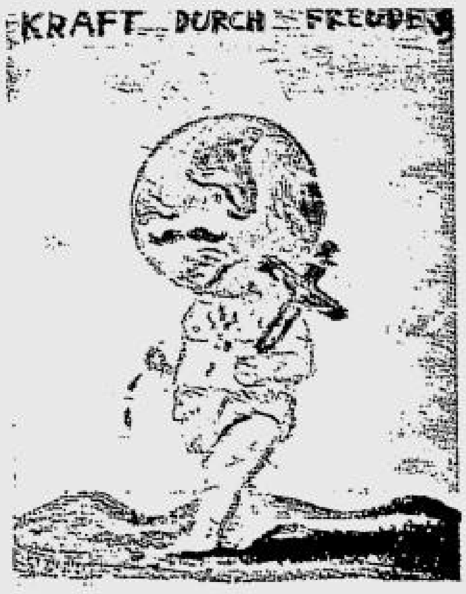
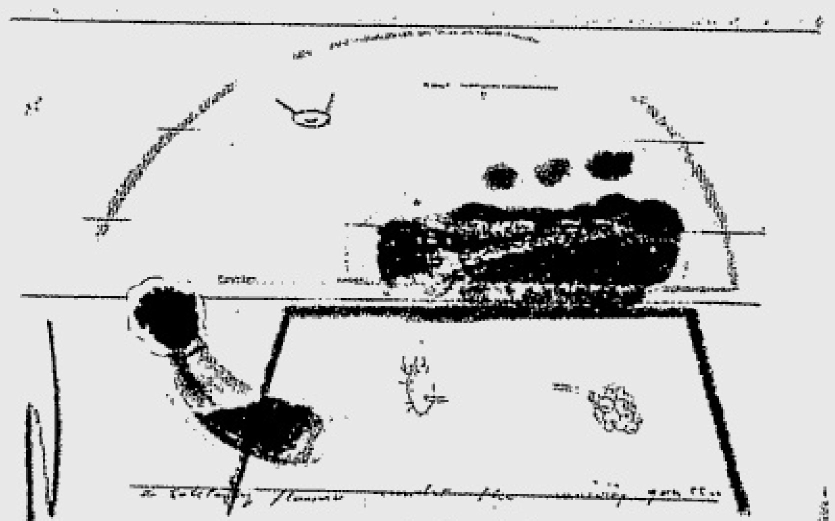
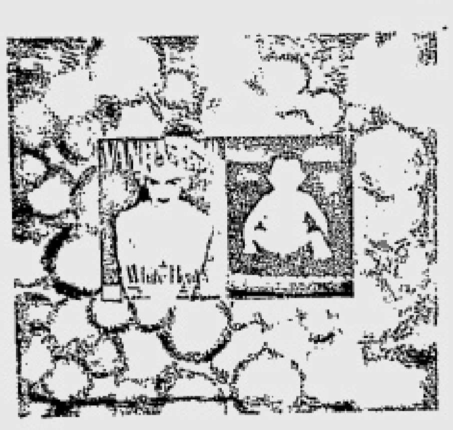


"**STRENGTH** through Joy," by Manuel Ocampo



LONG Fingered Branch," by Alfredo Juan Aquilizan



"**MADONNA** and Child," by Fernando Modesto

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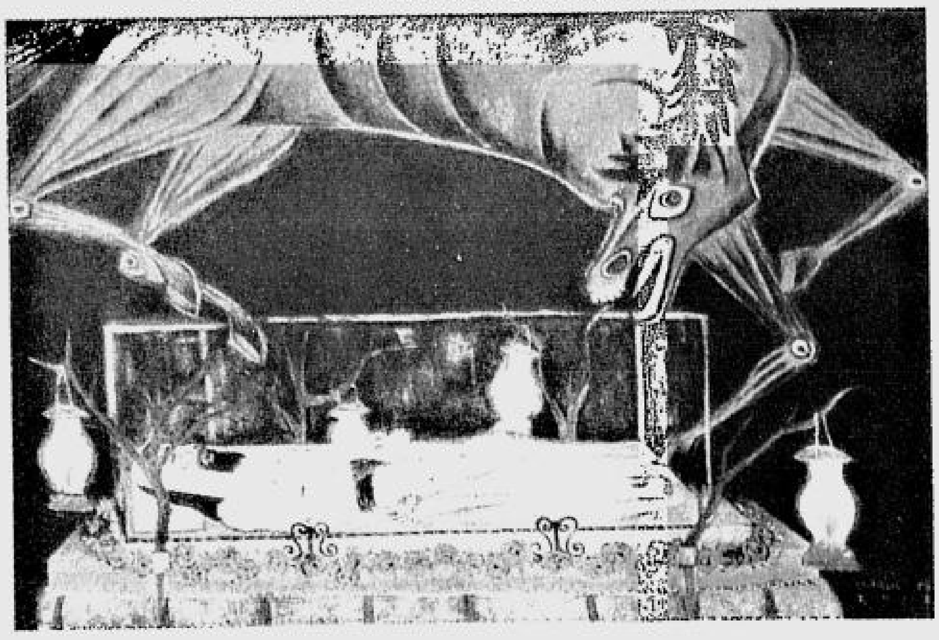
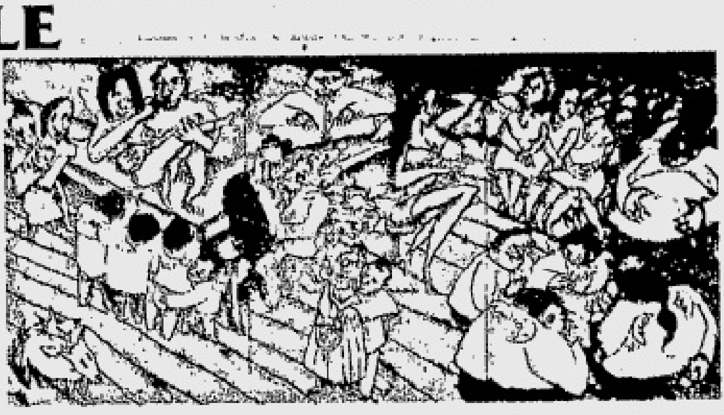


"SANTO Entiero," by Charlie Co



"I LOVE This Nightlife," (Triptych) by Dennis Ascalon

Images from the dark meadow

By Constantino C. Tejero

A DISTURBING spectacle was the recent exhibit "Raga-ák," presented by Balay Taliambong and Finale Art Gallery in the Art Center at the Artwalk, 4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall.

These are compelling images rendered in broad brushstrokes and bold colors, mostly red and its various tones, black and its varying shades. The earth colors, yellow, brown, ochre, slate, the blue, green and violet, only underline the surface violence or emphasize the inner turmoil.

This phantasmagoria comes from the fertile and grotesque imagination of Black Artists in Asia, a small group of politically and socially committed artists based in Negros Occidental, that social volcano of the martial-law years.

Included in the exhibit are the latest artworks of Nunelucio Alvarado, Charlie Co and Dennis Ascalon. In their powerful blending of the spirit of Social Realism and the technique of Expressionism, the three artists conjure Goya and the trio of Mexican muralists, no less.

"Here in our Negros town," says Alvarado, "the concern of many is over wealth, vast tracts of land, and gigantic sugar mills... Sugar is sweet, but bitter to the common man."

In eight pieces in oil on canvas, he evokes the dark imagery of the Black Paintings of Goya and the robust peasantry of Rivera. Visually painful and emotionally violent to the viewer, they bear equally violent titles: "Diwal," "Ugtom," "Utok Balana," "Pula nga Panganod," "Eye Witness," "Hala Sige Gabuta," "Bukog," "Paarak."

These are the *sacadas*, the long-suffering sugarcane-field workers of Negros. The images are of individual human figures with monstrous visage impaled by sugarcanes. In their Christ-like postures, they assume the spiky angst of Ang Kiukok.

These are images that one cannot paint unless, as art critic Robert Hughes says of Goya's art, one has known "extreme pain, fear and despair."

Dark allegories

Meanwhile, Co sees his latest artworks as "a culmination of my artistic journey that began with the harsh realities of Negros in the '70s through the turbulent '80s and the global '90s—three decades that have a similar leitmotif: conflict in various forms and dimensions."

He says these conflicts, along with his Catholic upbringing, have informed his art. And so his images are of war, from personal struggles to geopolitical battles, dark allegories relying heavily on symbols of folk Catholicism.

In their raw emotional power and wild mixture of fantasy and realism, the four pieces in oil on canvas remind us of Goya's "Disasters of War" and the art of Siqueiros.

"Puppet Web," drawn in straight lines and sharp angles and daubed in the artist's signature red, ostensibly depicts the corporate world peopled by puppets with scissorhands. Looking closer, one sees the figures stand atop a *carroza*, that carriage on which statues of the saints and biblical characters are borne during religious processions.

"Santo Entiero" shows the Dead Christ bedecked on the *carroza*, with a Picassoesque horse of the Apocalypse galloping overhead—a quite literal blending of pity and terror.

In "Captain America," the artist has replaced on the *carroza* the icon of San Miguel Arcangel battling the Devil with that of the American superhero, in effect, the US of A itself subjugating world terrorism. The billowing red and yellow in the background seem to set the world on fire.

In "Moro-Moro," set in the proscenium is the Muslim-Christian conflict that escalates into a religious war. Seen from the top view is the Crucified Christ, the all-forgiving, the ever-compassionate, bearing the sins of the world.

The exhibit's centerpiece is Co's "Carroza," a life-size installation in mixed media (plywood, steel, chicken wire, carabao skull, hardwood, satin and lace, religious icons, rosaries, photographs, marble, papier-mâché, porcelain, sawdust, white glue, sugarcane, soil).

IMAGES/ C4

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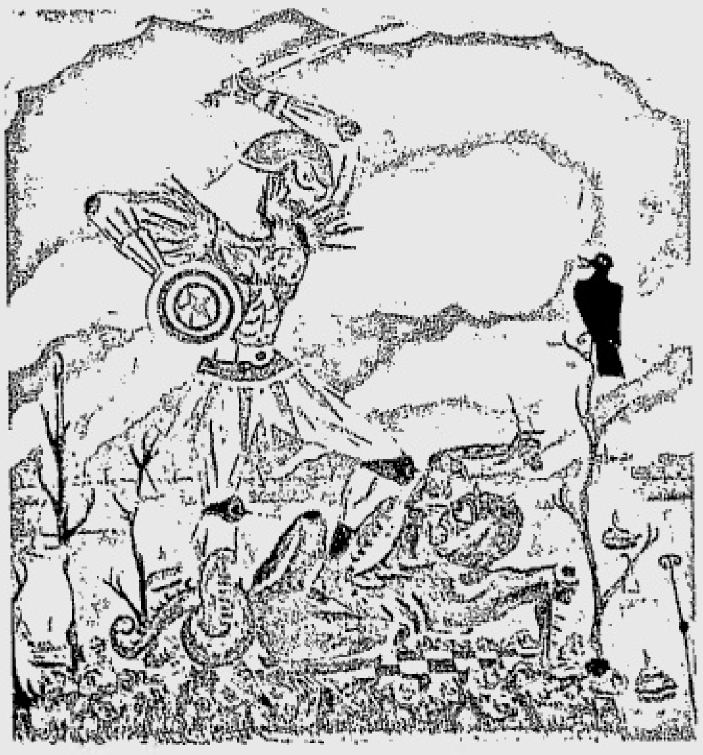
Images from the dark . . .



"CAPTAIN America," by Charlie Co

From page C3

It stands on a bedding of loose soil and sugarcane blades and sticks scattered with shattered human skulls. Its satin and lace drapery is embellished with rosary beads, religious statuettes, photos of Hitler, Marcos, Mao, Stalin, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, George W. Bush.

Atop the *carroza* are two human figures with beastly faces battling it out with primitive weapons, enacting the barbarity and inhumanity of conflict.

Bitter satire

While the imageries of Co and Alvarado show unmitigated darkness, Ascalon lets in some light. His 11 pieces in mixed media depict humorous scenes, but they are by no means buoyant. In fact, they evoke the bitterness of Orozco's bordello scenes and Goya's "Caprichos."

His barroom scenes are peopled by characters sprouting angel wings, with big eyes filled with human pathos. Even the dogs sporting on the floorboards sport angel wings ("A Different World"). But these are but just masks for human mischief.

"There is always that underside of things, people and issues other than the ones we see on the surface," says Ascalon.

Thus, using irony for his social satire on the dichotomy of good and evil, he calls forth those creatures of sweetness and light to proxy for his shady characters.

In "Angel's Choice," the Three Marys of the Gospel become the Tres Marias of the *kabaret*, alternately shy and sultry, cringing on the dancefloor.

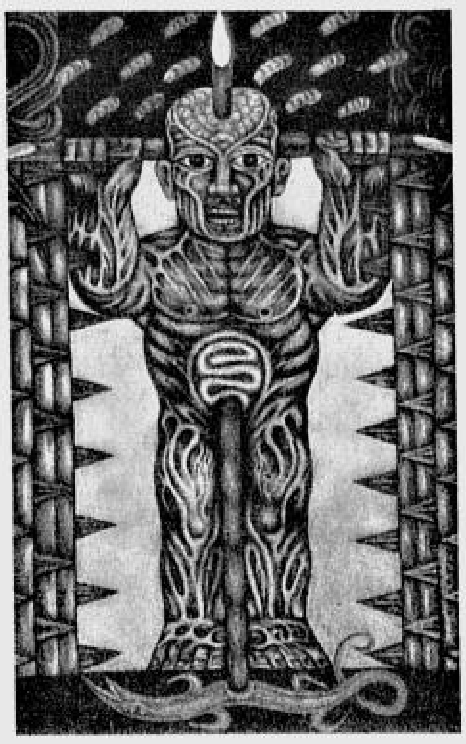
In "Madonna and Toy," the artist has spun on its head the Madonna and Child theme by depicting a matron escorted by her gigolo.

In "Family Outing" is the Sagrada Familia, probably a bar girl bearing a child with her regular customer.

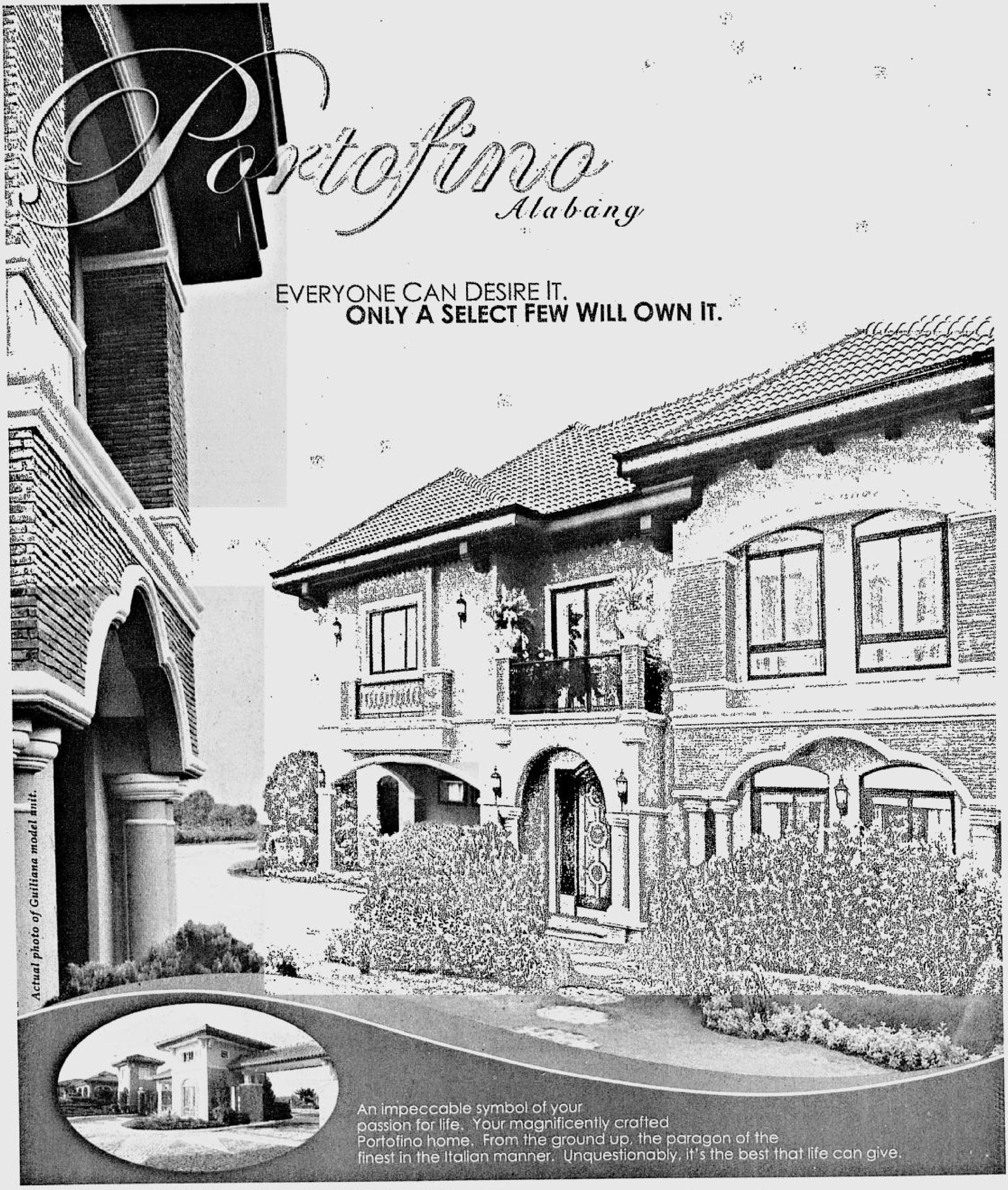
The triptych "I Love This Night Life" is a grand reunion of all the images in the smaller pieces, teeming with life and color, dark and bright, good and evil.

We see then that the image-making of Black Artists in Asia is no mere regional art. It is an art that is resolutely for and of the world.

And we thought Social Realism has had its heyday. Why, it still appalls.



"UTOK Balana," by Nunelucio Alvarado



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'FILIPINAS': Tabloid allegory

Since Filipinos obviously want family entertainment during Christmas, why not abolish or reset the film festival to another date and instead have a festival of escapist movies, foreign and local?

'GAGAMBOY': Costume inanity?

'MANO Po 2': Prolongs a lucrative franchise

Fantasia and carnival, not a film festival

By Lito B. Zulueta

THE 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival may have represented the strongest lineup of serious movies in recent years, but they are overwhelmed by the flagrant number of fantasy movies that makes the festival a carnival, not a showcase of the best of Philippine cinema.

Of the nine entries, at least four belong to the fantasy-horror genre. Although serious filmmaking remains strongly represented, it is noticeable that the festival has more and more accommodated fantasy movies that cater to the general audience of parents and their children.

It cannot be otherwise, since the Christmas season is generally a season for family bonding and togetherness. In short, it is a season for family entertainment.

Of course, it is quite a stretch of the imagination to classify such inanities as "Fantastic Man," "Captain Barbell" and "Gagamboy" as family entertainment, much less as wholesome family entertainment. But even Filipino parents and their brood have a right to inanity. They have a right to escapism.

Which brings us again to the issue of the film festival as inherently a protectionist, anti-consumer imposition. As I have said before, it is totally unfair of government to force Filipinos to spend their hard-earned 13th month pay and Christmas bonus on the inanities of Philippine cinema.

At the least, they should have the freedom of choice to consider the other option—the glossy inanity of Hollywood cinema.

Surely, there is a way for Filipino fantasy movies to be played alongside the glossiest Hollywood fares that are usually released for the Yuletide. If local cinema considers the issue a matter of survival, then some regulatory measures could be adopted, such as checking the number of foreign movies to be shown so as to give local movies a competitive breathing space.

And since part of the proceeds of the festival goes to Mowelfund, the local industry's social security fund, tariffs can be imposed on foreign movies so that part of their income will go to the fund. The tariffs are justified, since they can be a condition for foreign movies to have a slot in the lucrative Christmas season.

'CRYING Ladies': Anti-Filipino?

'FANTASTIC MAN': 'Lastikman' rip-off?

Meanwhile, the festival can be moved to another date that can best enhance its character as a showcase of serious cinema. As it is, Christmas is hardly the proper time to show serious (read: dramatic) movies because the holiday ambience goes against the earnest, resolute nature of artistic cinema.

The dead-serious entries that try best to respond to the festival's dead-serious criteria have to compete with the holiday revelry and idiocy of the more commercial entries.

And the tale of the tape shows they can hardly compete because year in and year out, the box office has always been dominated by the happily idiotic movies.

Gil Portes's "Homecoming," a dead-serious movie about SARS, is dead in the box-office water against "Barbell" and "Fantastic Man." And it was made to suffer the ignominy of having to join the parade of floats as a concession to the holiday mood.

SARS on a festival float? You must be kidding.

Hardly the best

The abolition of the festival will at least abolish the fiction that the festival is the showcase of the best that Philippine cinema has to offer. This year, despite the strong lineup, the three pictures chosen by the jurors as the best of the best could hardly be called that.

The third best picture, "Filipinas," is a sprawling domestic drama that echoes "Tanging Yaman," which swept the 2000 festival awards. It could be seen in fact as the nationalist and non-sectarian version of Laurice Guillen's highly fervent spiritual drama.

The trouble is that it has none of "Yaman's" rich characterization and seamless weaving of plot and subplots. It attempts an allegory of the contemporary Filipino nation in unabashed tabloid fashion so that the characters are basically stereotypes, representing certain motifs, in this case, of current events such as military corruption and adventurism, leftist activism, the government's uncritical pro-Americanism in the Iraq question, etc.

When the matriarch (Armida Siguion Reyna) understandably gets a headache from all of these issues invading her formerly serene domain, she pours her grief at the parish priest (Tony Espejo), who proceeds to dump on her another headache-causing current event: he beckons to a handsome teenager in hip-hop regalia, introduces him as his son, and tells her he is soon to leave holy orders to face the music. (Thank God, the *padre* is not a pedophile!)

The problem with the movie is quite obvious. If the movie were a newspaper, it would be one with several glaring banner headlines trying to bump one another out. If it were a dish, it would be *sinigang*, with ketchup thrown in.

Without a doubt, however, "Filipinas" is an important movie. It tries to make sense of the dizzying swirl of contemporary events that continues to unhinge the national sensibility

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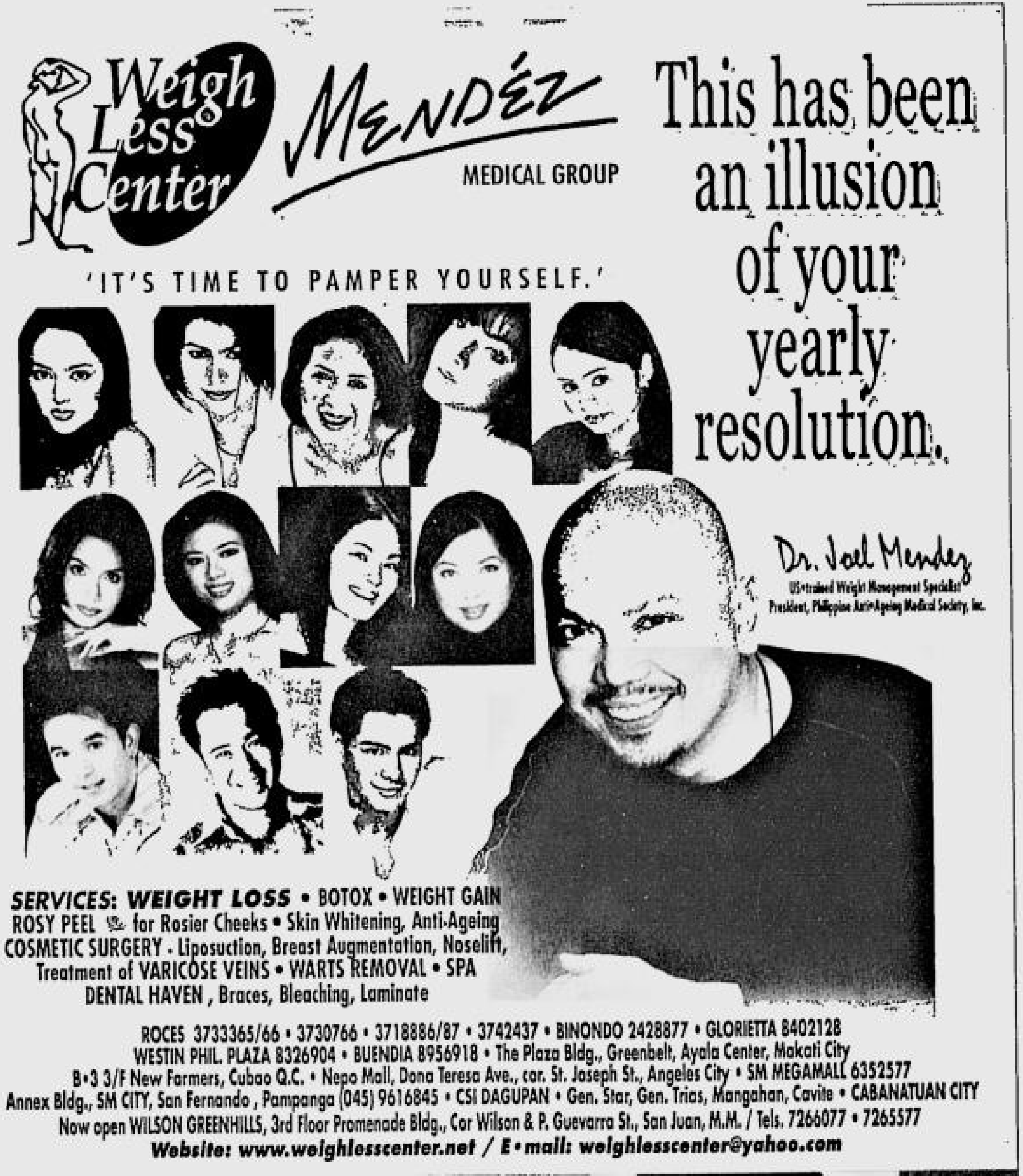

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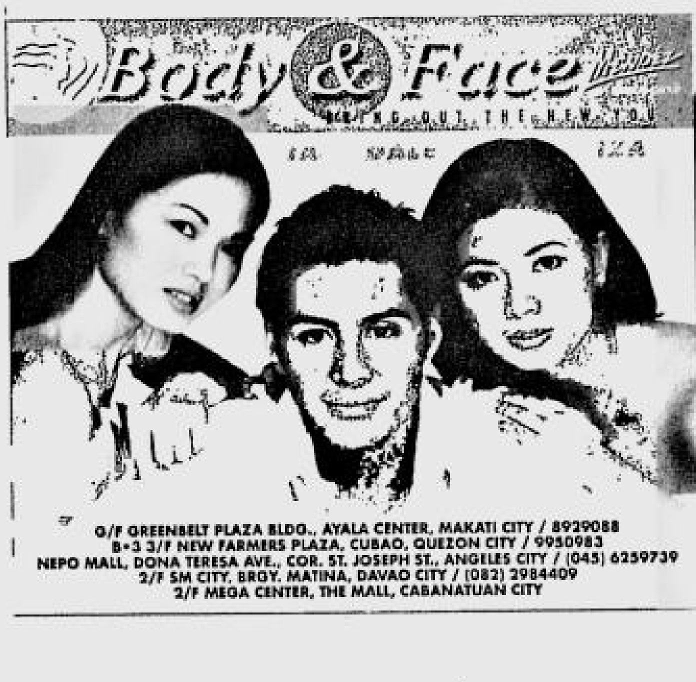

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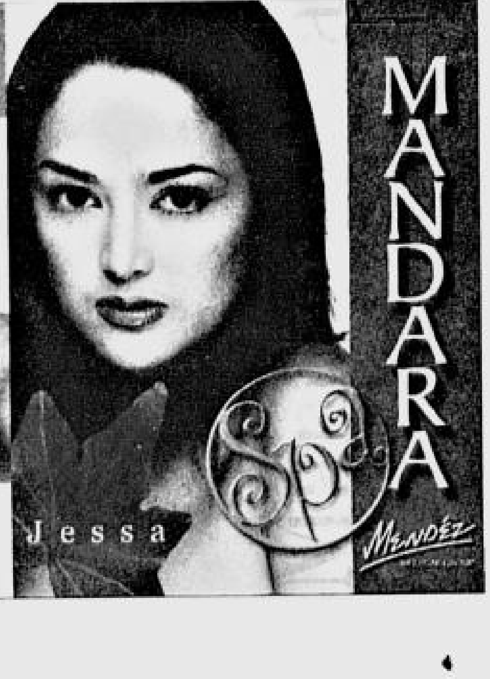

MANDARA
Jessa
Spa
Mendez

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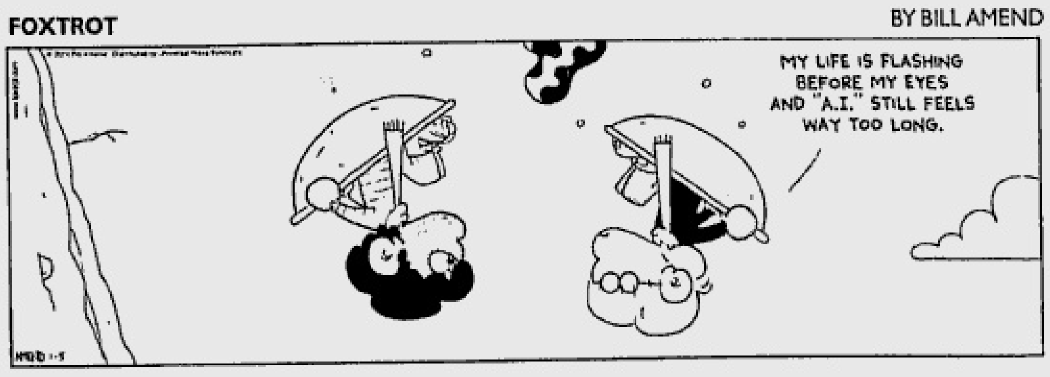
MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2004

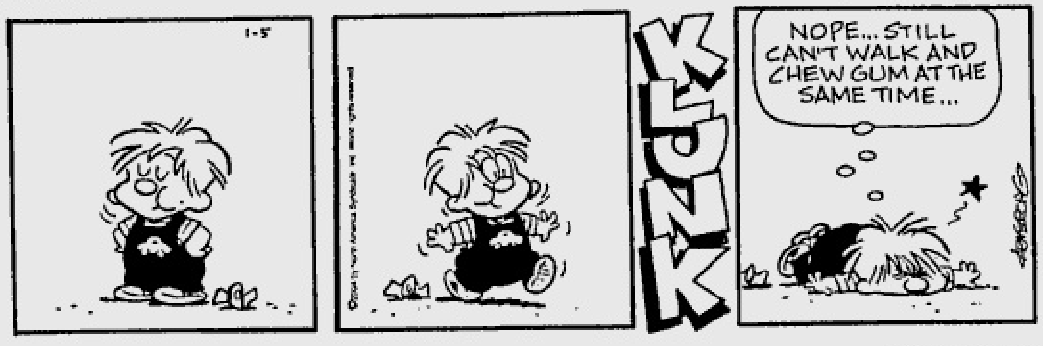
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


MY LIFE IS FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES AND "A.I." STILL FEELS WAY TOO LONG.

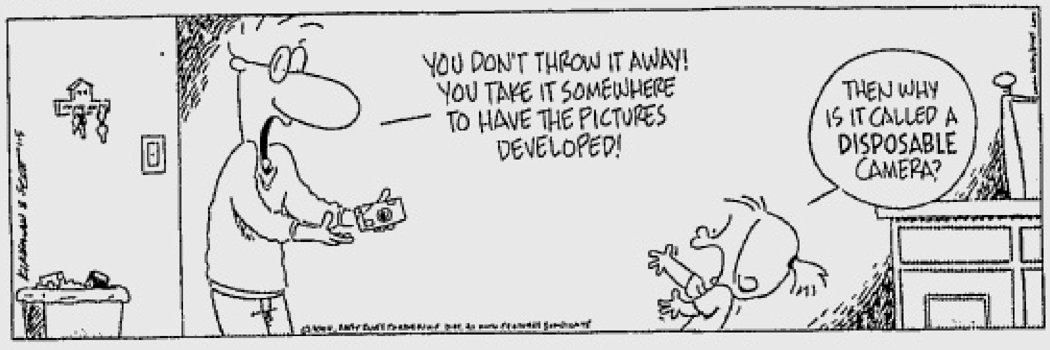
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


1-5
KLUNK
NOPE... STILL CAN'T WALK AND CHEW GUM AT THE SAME TIME...

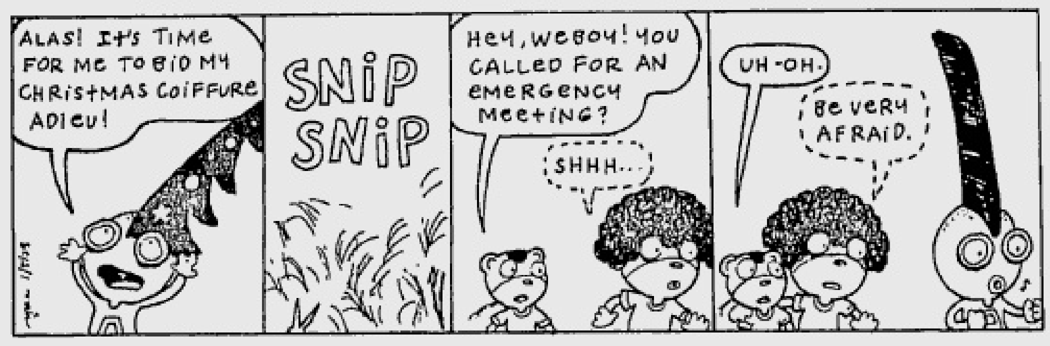
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


YOU DON'T THROW IT AWAY! YOU TAKE IT SOMEWHERE TO HAVE THE PICTURES DEVELOPED!
THEN WHY IS IT CALLED A DISPOSABLE CAMERA?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


ALAS! IT'S TIME FOR ME TO BID MY CHRISTMAS COIFFURE ADIEU!
SNIP SNIP
HEY, WEBOY! YOU CALLED FOR AN EMERGENCY MEETING?
SHHH...
UH-OH.
BE VERY AFRAID.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are tenacious and persevering. You will not back down from difficulties. Your surface cheerfulness and easygoing manner hide your serious dedication to whatever causes you embrace. You are extremely resourceful, and you work well with others. Your image changes throughout your life. The year ahead is social and full of variety and exciting challenges.
Birthdate of: Robert Duvall, actor; Umberto Eco, writer; Diane Keaton, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You want to do whatever you can to help a friend today. Partly, this is because you're more sensitive to the needs of others now. (You see what needs to be done.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Quite possibly, new insights that you gain today will eventually alter your long-term goals. (We constantly change our minds as we get new input.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You'll enjoy being involved in group activities today—especially activities connected with charities or working in hospitals and in institutions for those who are less fortunate.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You might find it gratifying to study something unusual today. You want to explore different ideas and learn new things. (Something might prove to be useful.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You have a strong desire to explore different systems of thought, new philosophies and belief systems. You're hungry to expand your horizons and learn more about the world.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you need assistance from someone, this is the day to ask for it. Others are ready to step forward to help you. This especially applies to your job and your work.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You want to do whatever you can to be supportive of children and your loved ones today. You find it easy to put the needs of others before your own.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): The demands of your ego are lessened today, and this helps you to recognize the needs of co-workers. Things you might normally dismiss are suddenly important.

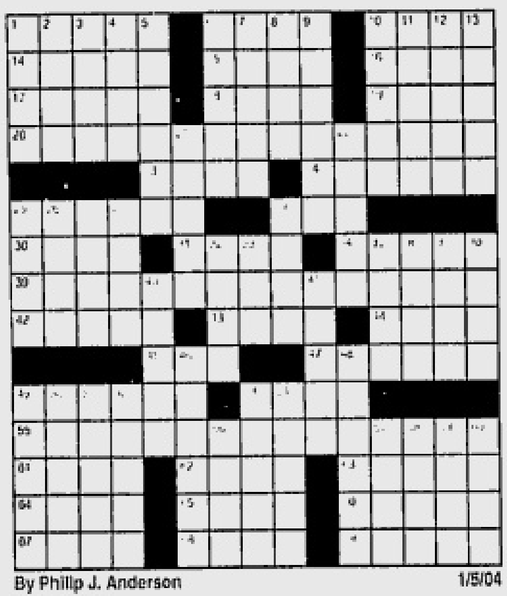
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your creative abilities are fabulous today. You'll enjoy playful activities with children, as well as entertaining diversions with friends.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your idealism is aroused. You want to help a family member. Basically, at a deeper level, you want to strive for the highest good because you want to become a better person.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a good time to be by yourself and think about life and where you're headed. Take some time to reflect quietly about what you want.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're willing to spend money to help someone today. This could be with a charity, or it might be with someone who is close to you. Either way, you will have the opportunity to benefit someone today.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
1/5/04

ACROSS
1 "Call Me __"
6 Woe is me!
10 Pronto letters
14 First name of a plane
15 Extinct bird
16 Host after Carson
17 Dramatic parts
18 Saltwater lake of Asia
19 Garden bloom
20 Non-lethal fishing
23 Aphrodite's child
24 Finely chopped
25 Scented hair dressing
29 Long-running NBC show
30 __ vincit omnia
31 Innermost part
34 Confused
39 No-holds-barred approach
42 Irregularly notched
43 Backing strip
44 Merit
45 Fuss
47 Danish seaport
49 Get away
53 Pitchfork point
55 Outfielders' low grab
61 Metal canisters
62 Leprechaun land
63 Ciao on Lanai
64 Fully aware of
65 Ladder part
66 Flax product
67 Chick's call
68 Sample
69 Medley meals

DOWN
1 Element #80
2 Buffalo of the Celebes
3 Lummox
4 Eldest Baldwin
5 Converted into pulp
6 "A Bell for __"
7 Certain noblemen
8 Sixth Jewish month
9 Invoking the force of religion
10 Exotic
11 Crevasse pinnacle
12 Aromatic herb
13 Struck a stance
21 Betel palm
22 Fragrant flower
25 Walk to and fro
26 Sharif or Epps
27 Marquand's sleuth
28 Curving paths
29 Chair or bench
32 Christiania, now
33 TV brand
35 Quaker pronoun
36 Look over
37 Otologist's focus
38 English princess
40 Oodles
41 Sandal strip
46 Abhor
48 Decorative stickers
49 Prohibit, legally
50 1996 Geoffrey Rush movie
51 Short tale
52 Fable master
53 Becomes weary
54 Bumbling
56 Ceremonial practice
57 Touched down
58 Property of sound
59 Bite and bite
60 Katzenjammer kid

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

P	R	O	L	O	N	G		G	R	A	M	M	A	R
R	E	V	E	N	U	E		A	U	D	I	B	L	E
E	L	E	V	E	N	S		V	E	S	T	A	L	S
S	I	R	E	S		T	H	E				B	E	T
S	E	L	L		D	U	O		P	A	P	A	Y	A
E	V	A		P	E	R	L		E	V	E	N	E	R
R	E	P	L	A	C	E	S		S	A	N	E	S	T
			A	N	O	R	E	C	T	I	C			
S	P	A	R	E	D		B	A	L	L	E	D	U	P
T	A	N	G	L	E		D	R	E	S		O	N	O
A	R	N	E	S	S		[illegible]	E	S		A	N	T	S
B	R	A				A	S	S		D	R	A	W	S
L	I	T	E	R	A	L		S	W	E	E	T	I	E
E	S	T	R	A	D	A		E	A	R	N	E	S	T
S	H	O	R	T	E	N		D	Y	N	A	S	T	S

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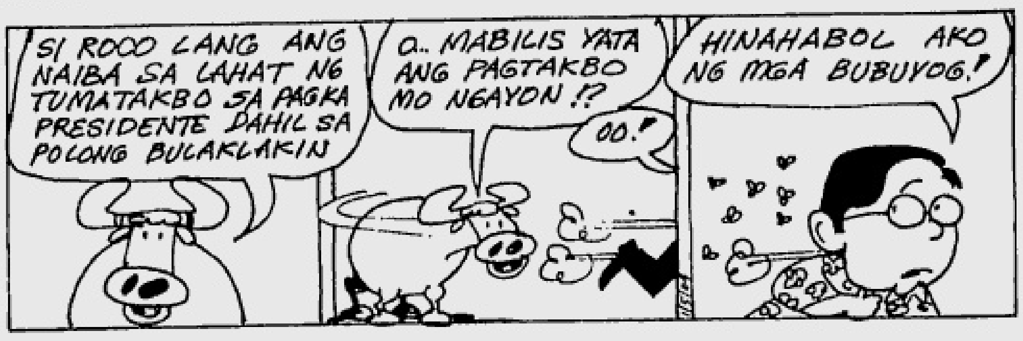
1/3/04

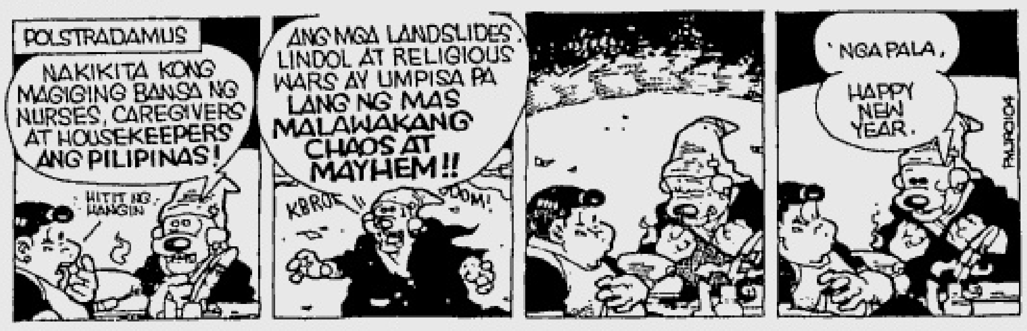
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


SI ROCO LANG ANG NAIBA SA LAHAT NG TUMATAKBO SA PAGKA PRESIDENTE DAHIL SA POLONG BULAKLAKIN
O.. MABILIS YATA ANG PAGTAKBO MO NGAYON !?
OO.!
HINAHABOL AKO NG MGA BUBUYOG.!

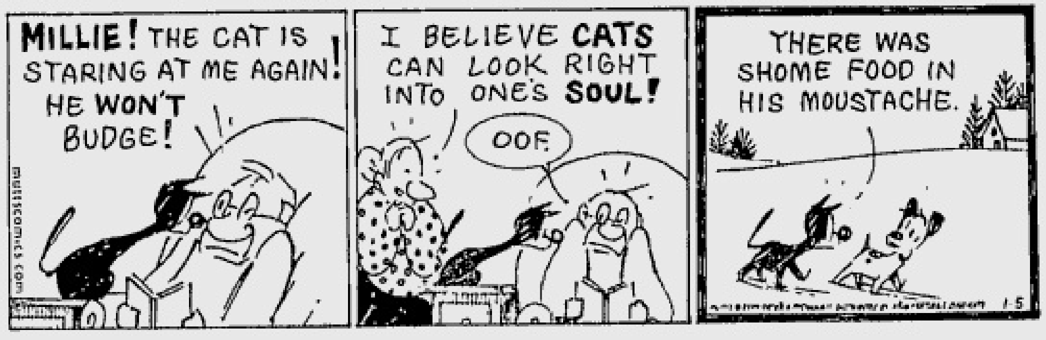
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


POLSTRADAMUS
NAKIKITA KONG MAGIGING BANSA NG NURSES, CAREGIVERS AT HOUSEKEEPERS ANG PILIPINAS!
HITTT NG HANGIN
ANG MGA LANDSLIDES, LINDOL AT RELIGIOUS WARS AY UMPISA PA LANG NG MAS MALAWAKANG CHAOS AT MAYHEM!!
KBROK!
BOOM!
'NGA PALA,
HAPPY NEW YEAR.

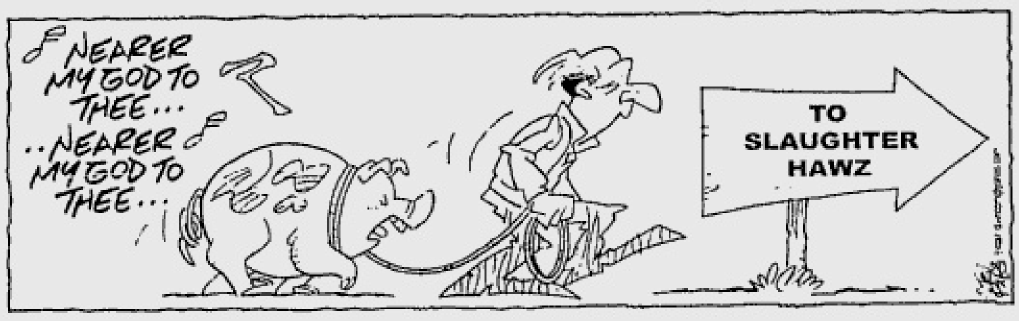
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MILLIE! THE CAT IS STARING AT ME AGAIN! HE WON'T BUDGE!
I BELIEVE CATS CAN LOOK RIGHT INTO ONE'S SOUL!
OOF.
THERE WAS SHOME FOOD IN HIS MOUSTACHE.
muttscomics.com
1-5

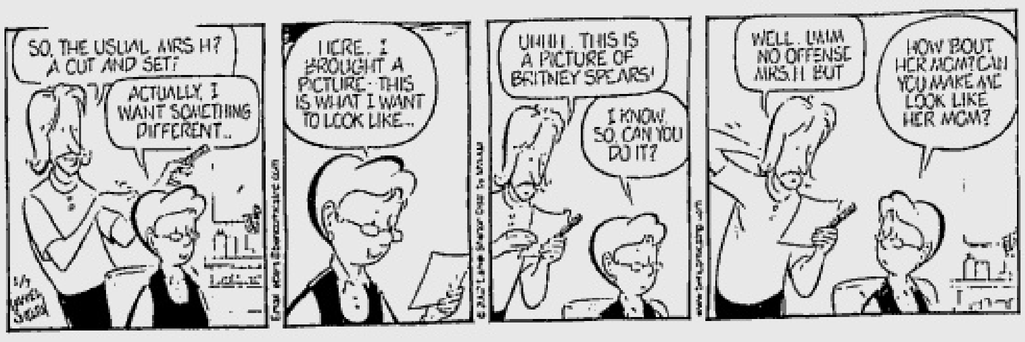
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


NEARER MY GOD TO THEE...
..NEARER MY GOD TO THEE...
TO SLAUGHTER HAWZ

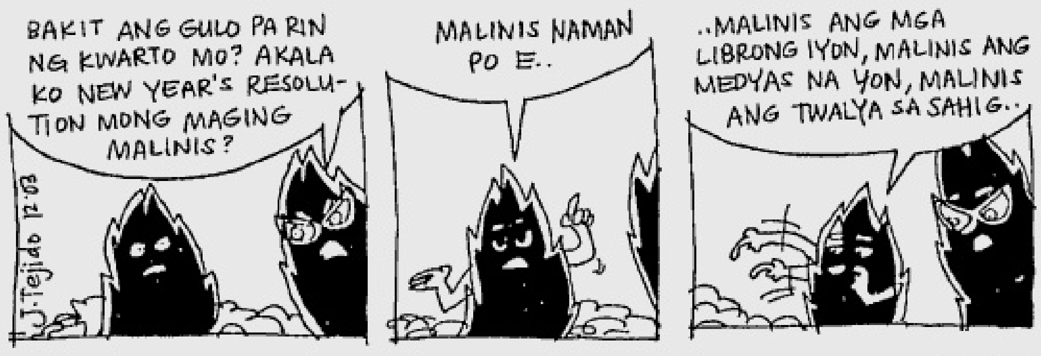
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SO, THE USUAL, MRS H? A CUT AND SET?
ACTUALLY, I WANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT..
HERE.. I BROUGHT A PICTURE - THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO LOOK LIKE...
UHHH.. THIS IS A PICTURE OF BRITNEY SPEARS!
I KNOW. SO, CAN YOU DO IT?
WELL.. UMM NO OFFENSE MRS.H BUT
HOW 'BOUT HER MOM? CAN YOU MAKE ME LOOK LIKE HER MOM?

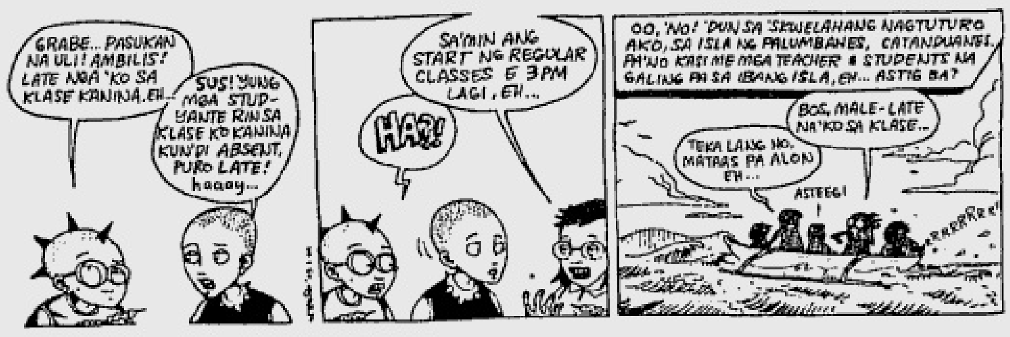
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BAKIT ANG GULO PA RIN NG KWARTO MO? AKALA KO NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION MONG MAGING MALINIS?
MALINIS NAMAN PO E..
..MALINIS ANG MGA LIBRONG IYON, MALINIS ANG MEDYAS NA YON, MALINIS ANG TWALYA SA SAHIG..
J. Tejido 12.03

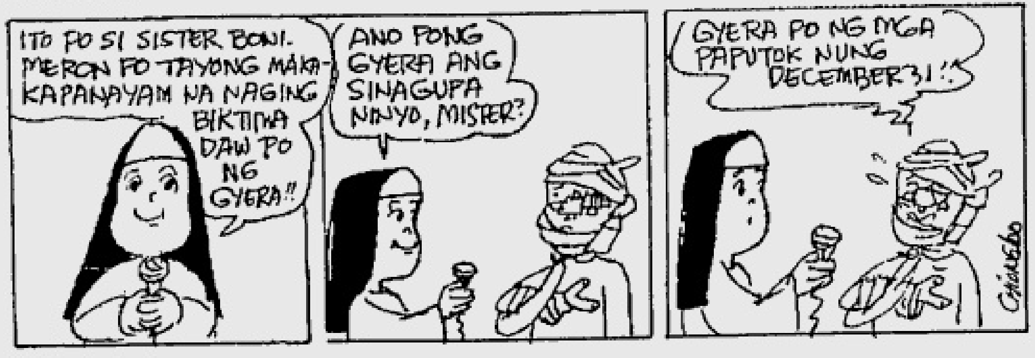
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


GRABE... PASUKAN NA ULI! AMBILIS! LATE NGA 'KO SA KLASE KANINA, EH...
SUS! YUNG MGA STUDYANTE RIN SA KLASE KO KANINA KUN'DI ABSENT, PURO LATE! haaay...
SA'MIN ANG START NG REGULAR CLASSES 6 3PM LAGI, EH...
HA?!
OO, 'NO! 'DUN SA 'SKWELAHANG NAGTUTURO AKO, SA ISLA NG PALUMBANES, CATANDUANES. PA'NO KASI ME MGA TEACHER & STUDENTS NA GALING PA SA IBANG ISLA, EH... ASTIG BA?
BOS, MALE-LATE NA'KO SA KLASE..
TEKA LANG HO. MATAAS PA ALON EH...
ASTEEG!
RRRRRR

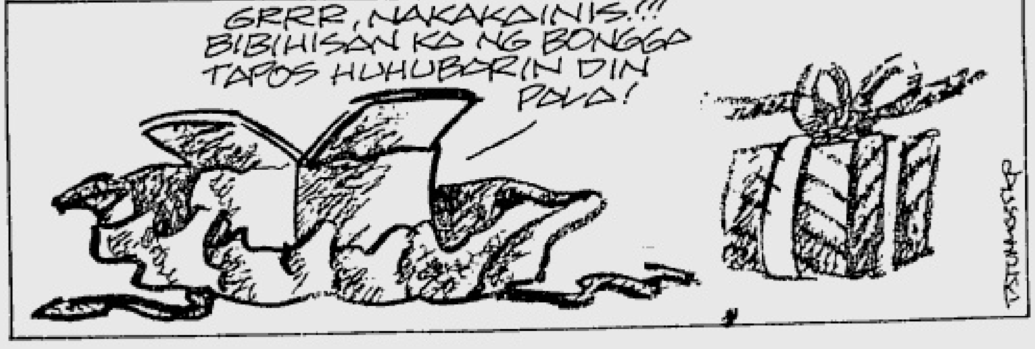
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

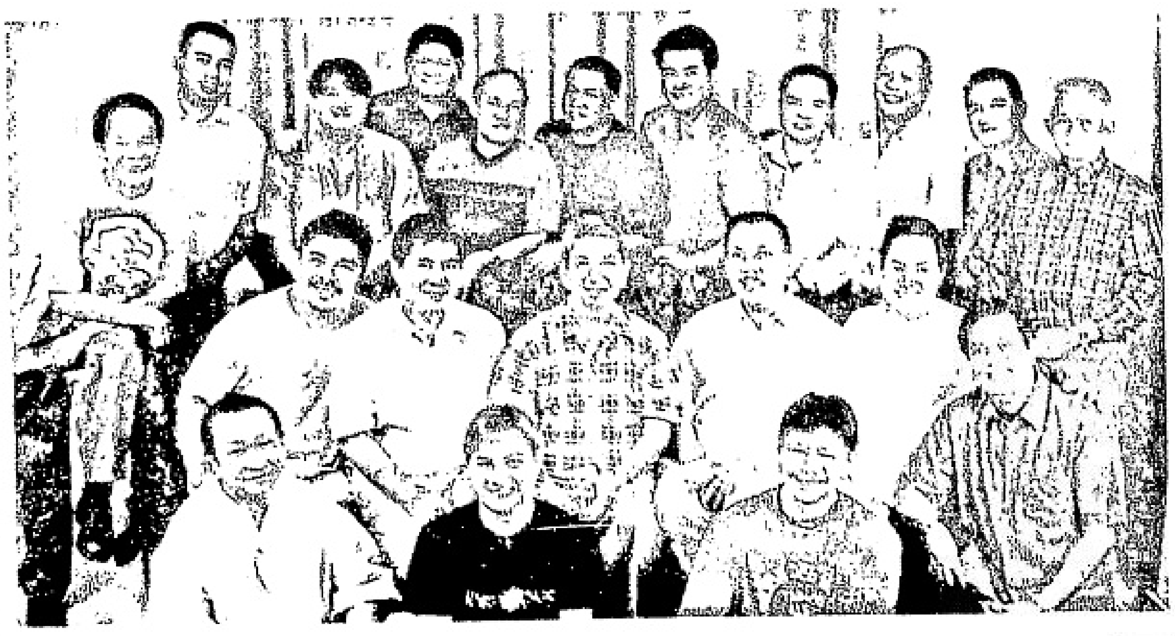

ITO PO SI SISTER BONI. MERON PO TAYONG MAKAKAPANAYAM NA NAGING BIKTIMA DAW PO NG GYERA!!
ANO PONG GYERA ANG SINAGUPA NINYO, MISTER?
GYERA PO NG MGA PAPUTOK NUNG DECEMBER 31!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


GRRR, NAKAKAINIS!!! BIBIHISAN KA NG BONGGA TAPOS HUHUBARIN DIN PALA!
TATUMASTER

Feast of Sto Niño on Jan. 25



CONGREGACION'S active members include: (front row) Steve de Leon, Rommel Elepano, Germs Malabanan; second row: Ogie Atos (Fiesta 2004 chair), Nolie Hans (treasurer), Ben Farrales (founding chair), Tony Adriano (chair) and Jing Chua (president); (back row) Dingdong Bautista, Brian Brosas, Donnie Delima, Dennis Maturan, Chito Ilagan, Manolo Estrelia, Deo Pamilyar, Venson Nobrera, Titoy de Vera, Totoy Bayabo and Jess Salgado

THE CONGREGACION del Santisimo del Niño Jesus is spearheading the Fiesta del Santo Niño on Jan. 25.

Chaired by Ben Farrales and Ogee Atos, the celebration coincides with the organization's 25th year.

Officers for 2002-2004 are Ben Farrales, founding chair; Tony Adriano, chair of the board; Jing Chua, president; Ogee Atos, vice president; Ricky Miranda, secretary; Chito Ilagan, assistant secretary; and Nolie Hans, treasurer.

Board members are Mel Chionglo and Dennis Maturan.

The annual fiesta features a weeklong exhibit of Sto. Niño images capped by a grand procession.

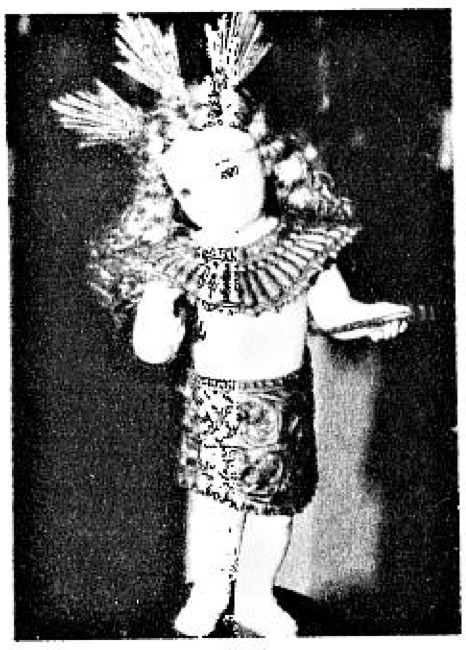
Registration for this year's events will be held 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Jan. 12-14, 3/L Philippine National Bank Long Gallery Area (Ingress of Images). The first day of the Mass and novena will be held 4:30 p.m., Jan. 15. The day will also feature the formal opening of exhibit and blessing of the Sto. Niño images.

Exhibit viewing hours are 9:30 a.m.-9 p.m., Jan. 16-23. Mass and novena will be held at the banking hall at 7 p.m. daily.

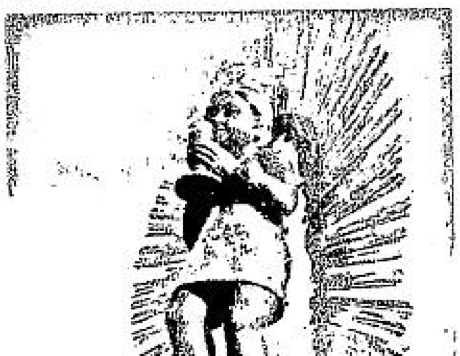
On Jan. 24, the pull-out of images (Egress of Images) will be at 9 a.m.-6 p.m. The anticipated Mass will be at 7 p.m. of the same day.

At exactly 3 p.m. of Jan. 25 (Sunday), *carrozas* will prepare for the procession from Philtrade to the Luneta grandstand. A fireworks display will cap the grand affair.

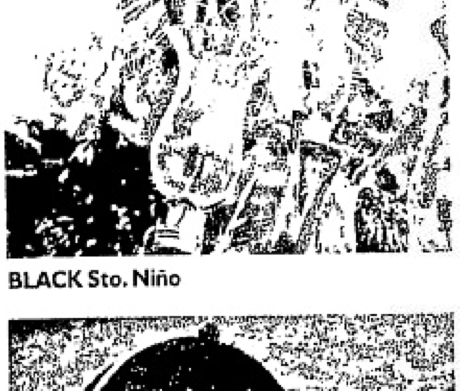
Call 5259126-32 local 18; Nolie Hans at 5254773, 5235102; Ben Farrales at 5253421 and 5248439, Mandy Navasero at 8993208 and 8963208 or e-mail mn_photocom@i-manila.com.ph



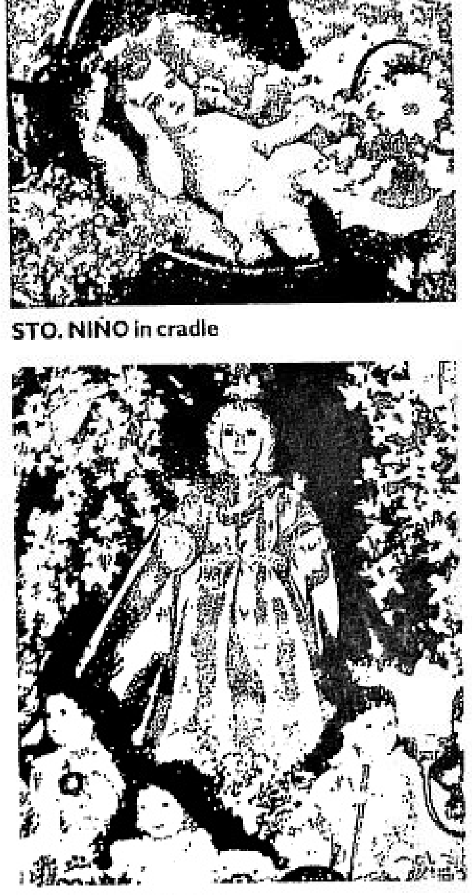
STO. Niño in cape and skirt



BLACK Sto. Niño



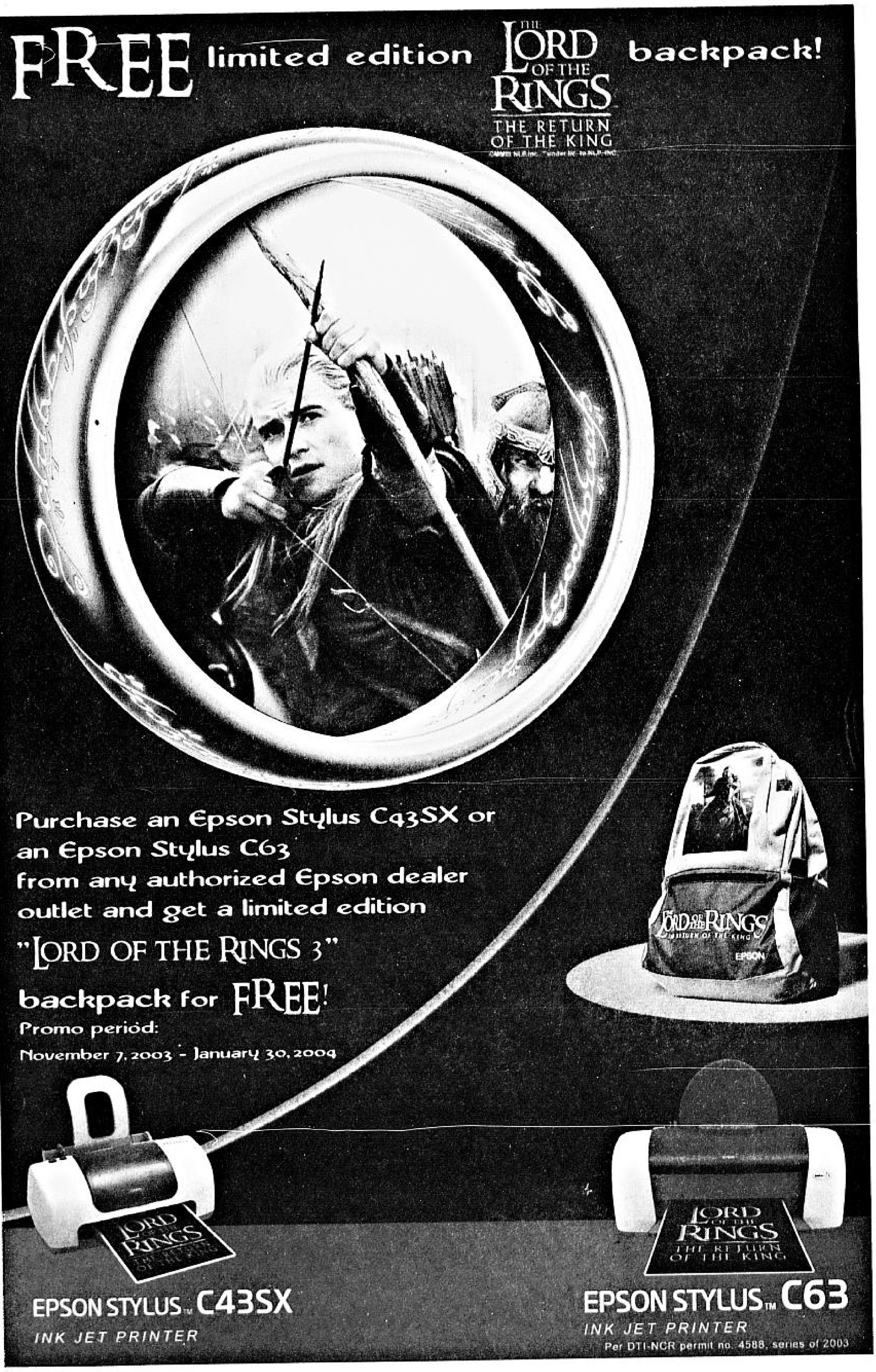
STO. NIÑO in cradle



PRINCELY Santo Niño

Mag-merienda Araw-araw!

EPSON



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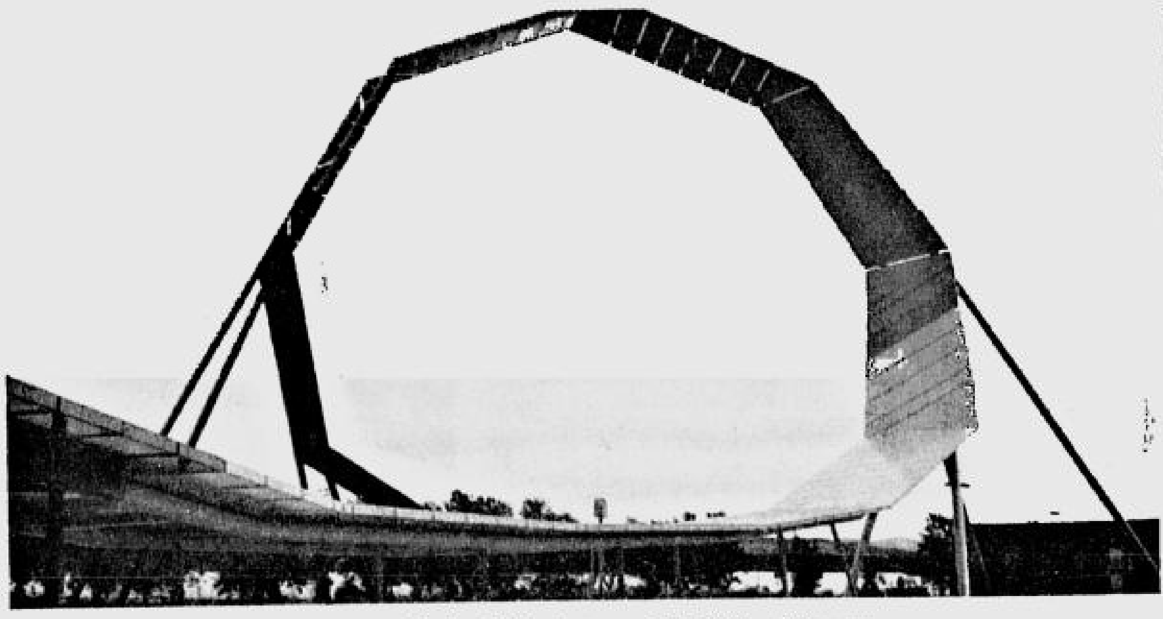
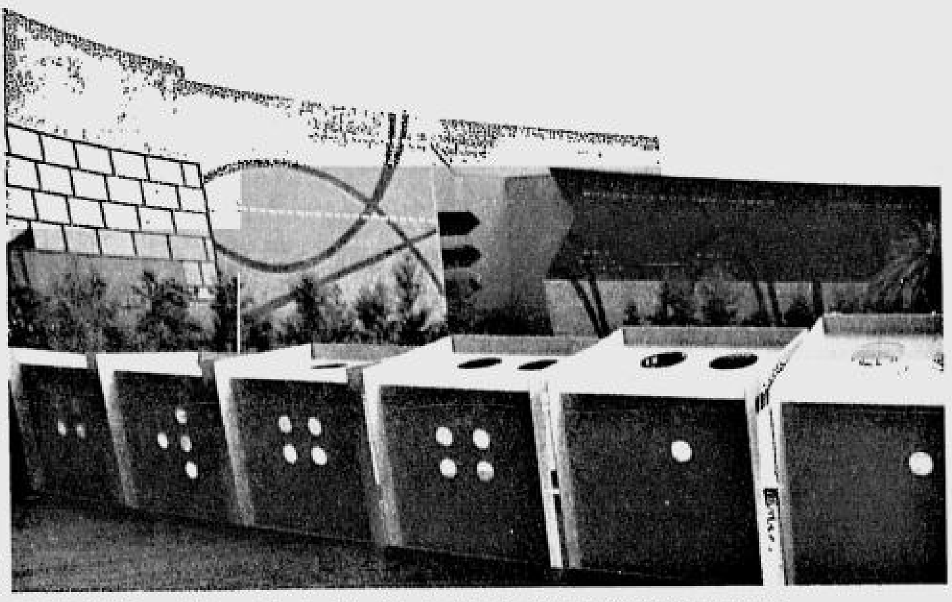


A FERRIS wheel-like installation is one of the intriguing features of the National Museum.



OVERSIZED rendition of the Braille alphabet for the blind outside the museum

Australia's monuments to past and present

Important landmarks Down Under give visitors abbreviated lessons in the country's history and culture

Text and photos by Linda B. Bolido

AUSTRALIANS may have been described as anti-nationalism but that does not mean they lack pride of place. This is particularly obvious in Canberra, a planned city like Washington D.C. in the United States, where there seems to have been a deliberate effort to make this Australian capital a showcase of the continent's history and the states and territories that make up the commonwealth.

The city acknowledges, even celebrates, Australia's checkered past—the Aborigines, the first occupants of the land; the exiled convicts from the United Kingdom; and the migrants that still continue to arrive—although they now have greater ethnic diversity than before. Instruction in what makes Australia and an Australian is not gained only by interacting with government functionaries. The edifices where they work seem to be as informative and educational, apparently designed with more than just function and form in mind. They are also meant to advance the cause of projecting the Australian identity.

HAND-PAINTED tiles done by young guests of the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery carry peace messages.

In the Parliament Building, for instance, almost every pillar, panel, tile and art work has a reason and a purpose for being there. The materials may have been sourced from outside the country, like Carrara marbles from Italy, but they were chosen because their colors, their textures, their shapes were emblematic of something Australian. Even the ordinary stretches of red gravel in the forecourt are symbolic, representing the vastness and dryness of the Australian landscape.

Testament

The building is also a testament to the country's aspirations. At the roof of the multi-level structure is a well-maintained lawn where people can have a panoramic view of the city that straddles the states of New South Wales and Queensland. Australians are encouraged to take a stroll on the rooftop lawn, a symbolic reminder to the nation's elected representatives, who hold office underneath, that ordinary citizens stand above them and they are simply servants of the people.

In stark contrast to the formal design and muted tones of the parliament is Australia's National Museum, undoubtedly so unlike most people's idea of what a repository of a country's historical and cultural treasures should look. It has been described as "anti-monumental, controversial (yet) compelling."

Occupying 6,600 square meters of space, the museum is thoroughly modern, colorful and oddly shaped, so unlike structures for the same purpose in other parts of the world that are generally somber, solid and seemingly as old as the relics they hold. If the Parliament House is Australia's past in black and white with basically just the Aborigines and the exiles sharing a vast stretch of land, the museum may be more like its present in living colors with its still growing multiracial population.

Not only do the vivid colors, unexpected shapes and angles of the museum fascinate, but here and there a visitor comes across something startling—a statue of a sitting Aborigine high up on a wall outside almost hidden by a palm tree— and intriguing-oversized renditions of the Braille alphabet for the blind.

Deliberate

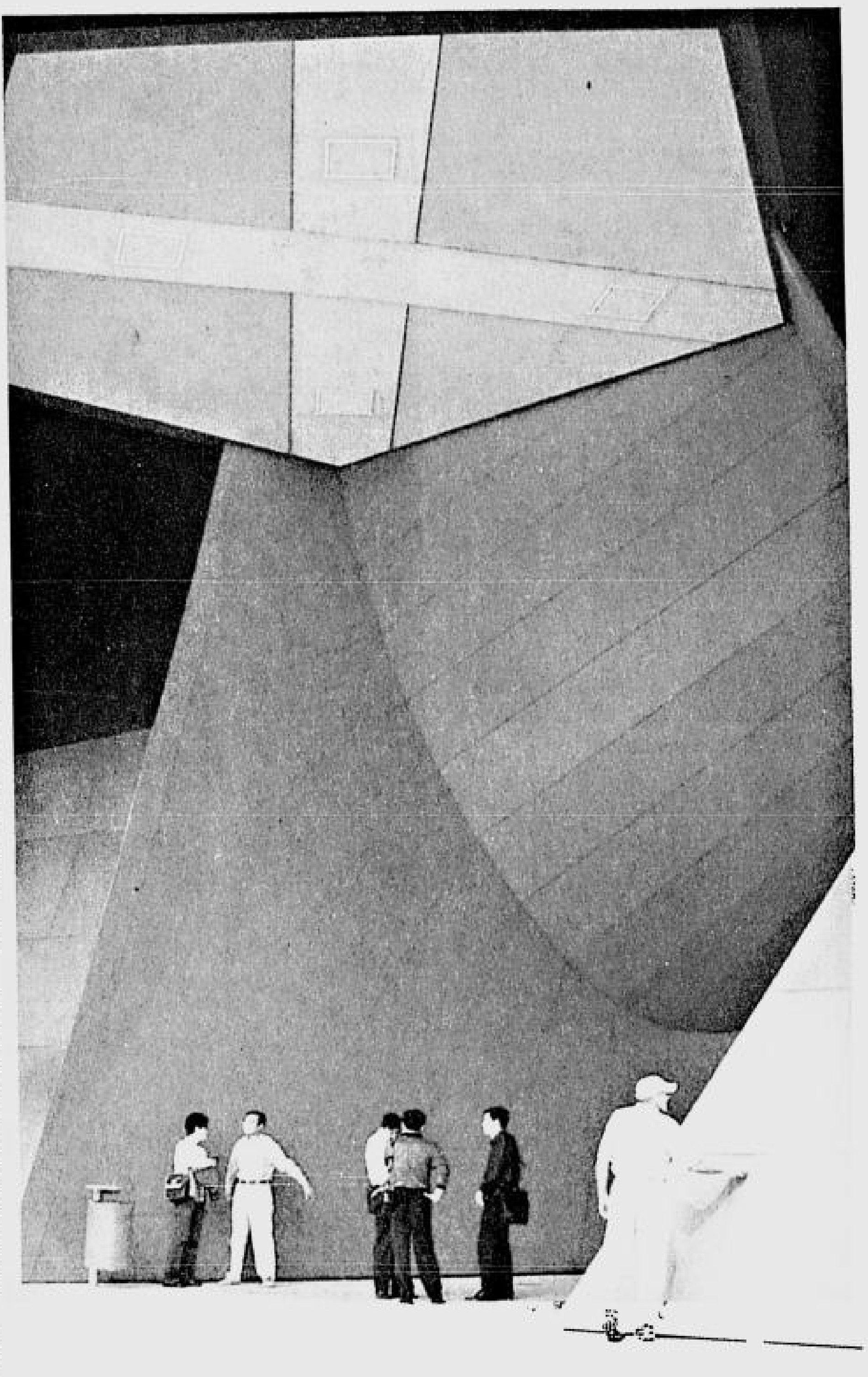
Like the parliament, the museum is as deliberate in trying to present some of the country's most distinctive features. Details of the architecture, accents, décor and colors were also chosen to say something about both people and country. Glass-paned, sail-shaped windows, for instance, are meant to evoke images of the famed Sydney Opera House.

Both parliament and museum are also galleries of sorts, showcasing artistic pieces by Australians and/or about Australia chosen to contribute to the goal of telling visitors as much as there is to know about the continent Down Under. Obviously, despite the description of individual Aussies as not nationalistic, indigenous artists still found their country and people worthy subjects of their creativity and imagination, putting on canvas or transforming into sculpture their feelings and thoughts.

If earlier Australian artists were more into the landscape, the local flora and fauna, budding artists seem to be more into broader themes going by exhibits elsewhere like in the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery in New South Wales. "Multiculturalism," which Australia is pursuing given its growing migrant populations, is a subject that now figures prominently especially in the works of young people, encouraged by various institutions to express and explore both their different-ness and same-ness with other ethnic groups.

Following the World Trade Center and Bali tragedies, and the resulting heightened religious and ethnic conflicts, peace among people of different cultures and faiths has been the theme of many artistic exercises.

THE MAIN hall and reception area of the museum have oddly shaped ceilings.



ODD shapes and vivid colors make the National Museum so different from most people's idea of a repository of historical treasures.

Fantasia and carnival, not a film festival

From page D1

and expose the tenuous scaffolding of illusions that tie the national fabric together.

It is a highly flawed film that decades from now will remain a strong social document of the way we were—or the way we have always been.

It could be said that the second best picture, "Mano Po 2," is better than its predecessor, "Mano Po," which dominated last year's derby. But it is misleading to call it a sequel since it is an entirely different story altogether, with an entirely different set of characters.

Thus, one cannot say Eric Matti's movie is an improvement on the Joel Lamangan original, which, however wobbly, was politically significant since it was the first "Sinoy" (Sino-Pinoy) saga.

At best, one can say "Mano Po 2" prolongs the franchise, considering the Sinoy skill at the business of franchising.

If the first "Mano Po" broke the taboo on the Sinoy straight or crooked business dealings in the face of Filipino native harassment of the Chinese, the second "Mano Po" breaks the taboo on Chinese concubinage.

The topic is at best intriguing. Matti mines fully the complexity of the issue in rich images, and he is stopped from his propensity to go overboard with his trademark fancy but disembodied camera work by Roy Iglesias and Lily Monteverde's chatty but engaging storytelling.

What keep the viewer from getting lost in the fascination of it all are the big-name stars and the garish Oriental makeup and art direction.

Just about every who's who in Philippine entertainment is here, with Susan Roces playing one of the wives and Kris Aquino, quite amusing again in her attempt at minimalist acting, playing a younger Roces in elaborate, overextended flashbacks.

And all of them sport the trademark slinky eyes, an ophthalmologist's grand vision and defining moment.

'Mano Po 3'

Ah, but the first best picture, "Crying Ladies," should have been titled "Mano Po 3."

It tells the story of three hard-up, quirky women who are recruited by a well-mannered and sensitive young Sinoy to cry on cue during the long wake of his father.

The movie holds our attention because of the comical situations, the absorbing glimpse on quaint but colorful Chinese customs, and the sophisticated film language of the writer-director, Mark Meily, and his very able crew.

But the movie is even more deeply flawed than the rest of the "best pictures." It may even be, I suspect, anti-Filipino.

The heroines are comically, even sardonically, portrayed as "crying ladies": Stella (Sharon Cuneta) is an estafa ex-convict who cheats her way through jeepney rides, gambles the little money she has, attends singing auditions even if she does not have the vocal goods, and tries to bond with her son, who is on cruel loan from her estranged husband and before whom she casually justifies her deception and depredations.

Doria (Hilda Koronel) is a stage mother and a frustrated actress whose 15 minutes of fame consisted of being trampled on screen by one of the ogres in Vilma Santos's campy 1970s movie, "Darna and the Giants"; and Chayong (Angel Aquino) is a Church volunteer who is a fixture in the confessional box for failing to resist the charms of a married guy.

The three characters are cardboard-thin and deeply caricaturish. There is nothing liberating about them. They remain enmeshed in their illusions and banalities: Doria in her Norma Desmond illusions of screen immortality, Chayong in her spiritual naivete, and Stella in her sorry attempts at being a mother.

Against these caricatures is presented the Sinoy character played by Eric Quizon: businesslike in his grief as he arranges every detail of the wake and funeral of his father, for whom he harbors ill feelings because of the deceased's philandering and abusive ways.

But before the interment, he reconciles with the memory—and mistress—of his father. Even his mother, who in a previous scene lashed at the criers for laughing during the wake, becomes a benign, conciliatory figure, offering friendship to the mistress and apologizing to the criers for her impatience.

The ending is quite droll and comical, but again, at the expense of the Filipino characters. After her son leaves her, Stella gets a call from the Sinoy, tipping her of an audition conducted by Japanese recruiters.

Partly because of his endorsement, and partly because she has acquired acting skills after a week of lachrymal bravura, she passes the audition—not as a singer, but as a videoke actress. She becomes a videoke superstar, and her face graces just about every videoke screen. She becomes the face that launches a thousand videoke matches.

She becomes, in short, the ultimate crying lady. When the videoke fanatic sees her face, it elicits the bawls, wails, sobs and blubbers of a trivial race that cannot get out of its frivolity, escapism and idiocy.

Mag-merienda
Araw-araw!

Erap: Everything all right, Jinggoy in FPJ Senate list

Story Below, Col. 2

Miriam keeps them guessing as she files COC

MIRIAM Defensor-Santiago last night continued to keep the opposition and administration camps guessing, filing her certificate of candidacy as a candidate of her own People's Reform Party.

As if on cue, three virtual unknowns filed their senatorial candidacies under deposed President Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino—a component of the op-

MIRIAM/ A5

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wed in a.m., Britney seeks annulment in p.m.

OOPS, I'M SINGLE AGAIN!

LAS VEGAS—Pop star Britney Spears' first marriage will be remarkably brief—even by celebrity standards.

The 22-year-old married Jason Allen Alexander, a childhood friend from Louisiana, about 5:30 a.m. Satur-

WED IN A.M./ A14

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Tuesday, January 6, 2004 ★★ 36 pages / 3 sections / vol. 19 / no. 29 P15
website: www.inq7.net

GMA to fight for shift to parliamentary gov't

By Juliet L. Javellana and Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she would "fight" to bring about a shift to a parliamentary and federal form of government but did not specify when this would happen.

The President made this one of the campaign platforms of her K4 coalition in a speech that she delivered before filing her certificate of candidacy yesterday at the Commission on Elections.

"We have made progress but we will need your support for the fundamental change in our political system. K4 will fight for us to have a parliamentary and federal form of government," she said.

On the eve of Ms Macapagal's filing, House Speaker Jose de Venecia said that she had given the go-signal for Charter change through a constitutional convention and that she had agreed to be a transition president to serve only until 2007 when the new parliamentary system would be in place.

The President's point man for Charter change and presidential adviser on special concerns, Norberto Gonzales, yesterday confirmed De Venecia's disclosure.

"That is the sacrifice she has to make," Gonzales said in an interview.

"She has really indicated her willingness to push Charter change and if it will

GMA/ A4

Erap boys split GMA party

UBOK NA!
K-4
KOALISYON
NG
KATAPATAN
AT
PANGULO

COMING-OUT bash for the K-4 coalition of President Macapagal and running mate Sen. Noli de Castro, on Monday morning at Plaza Roma in Intramuros. Flanking the presidential tandem are, from left, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, lawyer Pia Cayetano, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid. ERIK ARAZAS

Civil groups alarmed by 'compromises'

By Gil Cabacungan Jr., Armand Nocum and Cynthia D. Balana

THERE's a "snowballing of opinion" against President Macapagal-Arroyo's senatorial lineup.

"Very disturbed" civil society groups are likely to junk the administration's Senate bets, according to one of its officials. And a party-list representative has described the senatorial listing as "ungguyan"(monkeying around), a by-product of "political opportunism."

Civil society groups don't even like Ms Macapagal's running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, saying she could have chosen "somebody better."

Spurned as a senatorial candidate by his own party, Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez confirmed that some members of the ruling party and civil society groups were indeed alarmed over President Macapagal's "overwhelmingly pragmatic" approach in filling up her senatorial lineup with two or three dominant individuals allied with deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Alvarez said he was referring to Sen. John Osmeña and former Defense Secre-

ERAP/ A5

GMA unveils K-4 coalition with show of force

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

WITH A show of force and machinery, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday officially entered the race for the presidency next May in a quest for her first presidential mandate, vowing unprecedented reforms, including a change and overhaul in the system of government. *(Story above.)*

Wearing a business suit in her favorite powder-blue color, the President led her team from the new Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan, or K-4 (the Coalition of Honesty and Experience for the Future), including her running mate Sen. Noli de Castro and 11 senatorial candidates, in filing their papers at the Commission on Elections head office in Intramuros.

Ms Macapagal announced only 11 candidates in her 12-man senatorial slate just before the filing. Aides said the 12th slot was being held in reserve for former opposition Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago who was expected to formalize her switch to the administration late last night.

The filing turned into a virtual campaign rally for the President and her team as a crowd of some 5,000 followers thronged the small Plaza Roma fronting

GMA/ A14

Lacson runs alone as the lady says no

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerry Esplanada

IT'S OFFICIAL. The police general who said he hated politics—the opposition politician who cut an outsider's profile in the Senate—is running alone in the May elections.

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson is bidding for the presidency without a running mate or a Senate slate.

Lito Banayo, the senator's political adviser, yesterday said Lacson will run alone after talks with former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, whom he wanted as his vice presidential candidate, failed to prosper.

"It fell off late last night," Banayo said in a phone interview.

Banayo said another prospective running mate, Metro Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando, has decided not to run in this year's election.

"So (Lacson) would be without a run-

LACSON/ A14

RP maid suspected SARS case

By Blanche S. Rivera

A FILIPINO domestic helper from Hong Kong has been isolated after showing symptoms of the Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS), but health officials said it was too early to confirm if she had the deadly virus.

It was the first suspected SARS case in the Philippines since May last year and the fourth in the world since September.

Jean Marc Olive, World Health Organization country representative to the Philippines, said the domestic helper was not likely a SARS victim despite the commotion spawned by her case.

"We have to investigate the case and see if it could be SARS, but my personal opinion is that the chances of it being a SARS case are very remote because there is no SARS in Hong Kong," Olive said in a news conference at the Department of Health yesterday.

He added that even atypical pneumonia was "a typical winter disease" and did not necessarily mean the resurgence of the mysterious illness.

RP MAID/ A4

IMEE MARCOS: Is she in or out but where? PDI PHOTO

ERNESTO MACEDA makes it to the Comelec as Senate bet on the FPJ ticket. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

PEACE offering between bosom buddies Estrada and Poe: Jinggoy Estrada squeezes into the opposition Senate slate. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Maceda, Jinggoy in FPJ ticket; Imee, Tatad back

'Everything's all right,' says Erap who admits rift with 'Da King'

By Armand N. Nocum and Martin Marfil

THE FAMOUS friends quickly came to terms yesterday—and deposed President Joseph Estrada immediately announced the results: his son Jinggoy was now part of the Senate slate of fellow movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Ex-ambassador to the United States Ernesto Maceda also made it to the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino lineup.

"Everything's all right. Jinggoy and Maceda are part of the Senate list," Estrada told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

For the first time, Estrada admitted there had been a misunderstanding between him and Poe. But he quickly added that they had already settled it like friends.

"We had our differences even during our showbiz days. But we always managed to resolve it among ourselves," he said. The two movie idols have been close friends for more than 30 years.

Close aides of Estrada also disclosed that Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, the daughter of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and ex-Sen. Francisco Tatad, the Cabinet secretary who read Marcos'

MACEDA/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol Region, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/06/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

GMA orders poll security after blast

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.,
Alcuin Papa and
Christian V. Esguerra

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the police and the military to immediately draft an action plan, particularly for election hot spots, to prevent this year's polls from being marred by violence.

The President issued the directive in the wake of Sunday's bombing in Parang, Maguindanao, that killed at least 15 people and wounded 87 others. The military believes the attack was politically motivated. No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion so far.

Among those hurt was Parang Mayor Vivencio Bataga, who was believed to be the primary target of the attack. Bataga, 57, who underwent surgery for wounds to his face and his side, has blamed political enemies for the assault but did not identify them.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President has ordered a thorough investigation of the bombing incident.

"Right now, one of the angles we are looking at is politics," Parang police chief Oscar Nantes said.

Police said a homemade bomb was hidden on a motorcycle parked near the crowded gymnasium where a basketball tournament was being held. It was detonated by cellphone, Nantes said.

"The early arrest of the perpetrators is imperative so that we can unravel the real motive behind the incident," Bunye said. "All concerned agencies have been mobilized to assist the victims and their kin."

BATAGA

In a statement, Bunye said that while authorities were determining the motive for the Maguindanao bombing, the President wanted the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to come up with a comprehensive operational plan to check election hot spots and forestall election-related violence in the country.

PNP director for operations Avelino Razon said Maguindanao was one of at least 12 election "hot spots" the PNP had identified based on election-related violence in the province during the May 2001 elections.

Razon said that Regions 5, 12 and 13 each had two "areas of immediate concern" while Regions 2, 3, 8, 10, 11 and CAR each had one.

Southern Tagalog has five "areas of concern" while Regions 3, 5, 7, 8, CAR and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao each had one, he said.

"We will look after these areas where there will be added deployment of PNP and armed forces personnel," Razon said. "There will also be intense intelligence coverage in these areas."

No area in Metro Manila was being monitored for election-related violence, he said.

The rise of private armed groups that might be used in the coming elections was also a major concern of the police.

As of December, there were a total of 114 private armed groups scattered in all but four regions in the country, said Razon. Only Regions 6, 9, 10, and 11 have no known private armies.

At least 78 of these groups are based in the ARMM, which, along with Metro Manila, Misamis Occidental, and seven other areas, tops the PNP list of areas of "immediate" concern due to the possible outbreak of violence during the election season.

Razon said the number of private armies actually went down from 176 last year to 114 as of last month.

In Sunday's incident, Bataga had just finished delivering a speech when the bomb exploded. Bataga, who has survived 3 previous assassination attempts, is running for re-election in the predominantly Muslim town under the Lakas-CMD banner.

Armed Forces Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, AFP spokesperson, told newsmen yesterday that political foes of Bataga could have staged the bombing.

"The primary angle being looked into is still the political angle, meaning this might have a bearing on the ongoing political contest or feuds between the contending forces in Parang," Garcia said.

The police are convinced Bataga was the target of the bombing.

Among the wounded was the 11-month-old daughter of a policewoman, police officer Sharifa Irijani said.

Many of the victims were hit by shrapnel inside the gymnasium, which had a roof but no walls, Irijani said. Others were hurt in the stampede, she said.

Eid Kabalu, spokesman for the Muslim separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, condemned the attack and said his group will help authorities track down the perpetrators.

Roadblocks have been set up around Parang and police are trying to trace the owner of the motorcycle used in the attack. *With reports from AFP, AP*

DOCTORS at a Cotabato City hospital treat one of the wounded in the Parang gym bombing. AP

Military vows neutrality

By Alcuin Papa

THE ARMED Forces of the Philippines (AFP) assured the public yesterday it would remain neutral during the campaign period and the elections in May, despite the candidacy of its commander-in-chief, President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, AFP spokesperson, said the armed forces will assume their traditional role of insuring the peaceful conduct of the local and national elections.

"This is a political exercise and a very significant one for the country. But this does not change the constitutional role and mandate of the armed forces to be apolitical and impartial during the elections. The AFP will endeavor always to make sure orderly and peaceful elections are held and the will of the people is expressed.

"The armed forces will be neutral in the political exercise and would not be taking any political sides. It is not going to engage itself in partisan politics," said Garcia at a news conference at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, yesterday.

He said the AFP was in the process of coordinating with other government agencies like the Commission on Elections and the Philippine National Police to keep the peace during the elections.

"There have been initial talks and these are ongoing. This will peak as we move towards May and some fine-tuning would be done to make sure that our objective of having peaceful, orderly, untroubled and honest elections could be realized."

Garcia also said the talks involved identifying potential election "hotspots" all over the country.

One of those considered a hotspot is Parang, Maguindanao, where a bomb exploded in a gym on Sunday after Mayor Vivencio Bataga had addressed the crowd. Bataga's political opponents were believed to be behind the blast, Garcia said.

A complete list of the hotspots will be released later, Garcia added.

Latest Ibon poll shows Poe besting Roco, others

By Alcuin Papa

ACTION STAR Fernando Poe Jr. continues to rule of all presidential poll surveys.

After earlier topping the presidential surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia, Poe yesterday asserted his supremacy over his rivals in the May elections in a recent Ibon Foundation survey.

The Ibon survey conducted between Dec. 1 to 14 showed Poe grabbing the lead with 26.08 percent from erstwhile topnotcher Raul Roco. This was a huge increase from the 11.21 percent Poe got in the third quarter of 2003.

Roco slipped to second place with 22.46 percent, followed by Sen. Noli de Castro with 14.46 percent. De Castro recently agreed to be the running mate of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

It was the first time that Roco was dislodged from the No. 1 position since Ibon started conducting its quarterly surveys for the May 2004 presidential elections.

The rankings of President Macapagal and Sen. Panfilo Lacson in the latest Ibon survey did not improve. Ms Macapagal remained at fourth place with 10.50 percent ,while Lacson stayed in fifth place with 10.41 percent.

The Ibon survey assumes a margin of error of plus or minus three percent.

Antonio Tujan Jr., Ibon research director, said the survey involved 1,162 respondents.

Poe consistently led the Ibon survey assuming different sets of presidential candidates.

In a four-cornered fight among Ms Macapagal, Poe, Roco and Lacson, Poe got 31.84 percent with Roco a close second with 30.55 percent.

In a four-cornered fight between Ms Macapagal, Poe, Roco and De Castro, Poe again took the lead with 29.26 percent, while Roco got 28.74 percent.

In a three-way fight featuring Ms Macapagal, Poe and Roco, Poe got 35.80 percent followed closely by Roco with 35.28 percent. The President was a distant third with 12.31 percent.

In the vice presidential race, Tujan said it was a neck-and-neck fight between ABS-CBN talents De Castro and Sen. Loren Legarda. De Castro garnered 25.39 percent, up from 20.28 percent in the third quarter, while Legarda got 21.77 percent, down from 29.88 percent in the third quarter.

Tujan said that considering the three percent margin of error, the race for vice president will be a tightly fought contest.

The Ibon survey also showed the satisfactory rating of Ms Macapagal continuing to fall. Almost 71 percent of Filipinos said they were unhappy with her performance, from 62.06 percent in the third quarter of last year.

Bar Bro. Eddie, Comelec asked

A LAWYER yesterday asked the Commission on Elections to disqualify evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva as a presidential candidate, saying the Philippines was a democratic, not a theocratic state.

In a five-page petition, lawyer Samson Alcantara, president of party-list group Advocates and Adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers (AASJS), said that Villanueva was not eligible to run for president based on Section 6, Article II of the Constitution. The provision states that "the separation of the Church and state shall be inviolable."

Alcantara also warned that if a religious leader won the presidency, the "awesome powers and vast resources of that political office" would be utilized to ensure the predominance and perpetuation of the President's religion.

This, Alcantara said, could give rise to "political intolerance, and given the fanaticism of many followers, to the persecution of those who hold contrary religious beliefs. Religious freedom, as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, will be a total fantasy."

Aside from his legal arguments, Alcantara also cited portions of the Bible where Jesus was quoted as saying that his Kingdom did not belong to this world.

In an earlier interview, however, Villanueva said he would ensure the separation of Church and state if he won.

"My running as a preacher of righteousness does not violate the separation of Church and state in the Constitution," he said, pointing out that the Constitution bars the use of state funds for the establishment of any particular religion.

But Alcantara insisted the idea of separating religion and state was supported even by the Supreme Court, which had said in a decision that the idea is to delineate the boundaries between the two institutions and thus avoid encroachments by one against the other because of a misunderstanding of the limits of their respective exclusive jurisdictions. *Martin P. Marfil*

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Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.
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In the area of Tacloban City, MEDICard members can seek the services of **Dr. Juanito C. Dy.** Doctor Dy is a Medicine graduate of the Southwestern University in Cebu and specializes in General Surgery. He finished his residency training for the latter in 1987 at the Medical Center Manila. Dr. Dy puts great importance on his family making sure that he spends quality time with his wife and five kids. He is also known to be an expert in martial arts. For consultations, members may visit his clinic at Room 13 of the Divine Word Hospital, Avenida Veteranos, Tacloban City. Consultations are from Mondays to Fridays 9 AM to 12 noon and again at 2 to 5 PM.

Meet **Dr. Joseph Alfie T. Bonifacio**, our accredited dental healthcare specialist in Angeles City, Pampanga. Dr. Bonifacio is a Dentistry graduate from the University of the East who specializes in Implant Surgery and Cosmetic Dentistry. He has more than 10 years of clinical experience and is a proud member of the International Association of Orthodontics. For your consultations, visit his clinic at Suite 201, Lawrence Pure Bldg., McArthur Highway, Balibago. Dr. Bonifacio's clinic is open from Mondays to Saturdays, 8:30 AM to 6 PM.

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May polls boon not bane to economy, says Palace

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Carlito Pablo

MALACAÑANG yesterday said the May elections would be a boon rather than a bane to the country's financial markets, as it disputed analysts' warnings about the political and fiscal situation of the country.

A member of the House of Representatives, however, said the government could expect a bigger budget deficit this year after Congress failed to pass a stringent revenue-generating measure.

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said: "Uncertainties over the elections are exaggerated. The polls will be a triumph of democracy and good governance and will be good for the markets."

Malacañang was reacting to the plan of global credit rating agency, Moody's Investors Service, to downgrade the Philippines' sovereign credit rating soon due to prevailing political uncertainties and weakness in the fiscal sector.

A credit rating downgrade would make it more expensive for the government to borrow foreign funds.

Bunye said the Macapagal administration had met its fiscal target (of keeping the budget deficit below its ceiling of P202 billion), and it would do even better this year by further trimming expenses.

"This is an accomplishment in itself and is no small feat. It shows that the President has the clout and experience to hold the economy firm and to turn it around to bring in more investments, build infrastructure and create jobs," Bunye said.

But Moody's was unimpressed. Moody's vice president and senior credit officer Thomas Byrne said: "It is good that the government met last year's deficit target but, to begin with, the target was twice what it should have been (P130 billion). To us, it was not a great accomplishment."

Revenues lost

But whoever wins the presidential election would have to contend with a serious budget deficit problem after Congress failed to pass a vital revenue-enhancing measure, according to Rep. Herminio Teves (Lakas, Negros Oriental).

Teves said the current 12th Congress has failed to pass a long-pending bill on the "indexation" of the so-called "sin taxes" on tobacco and liquor products.

"Since the measure was not approved by Congress, it definitely is going to be very problematic for the incoming administration," Teves said.

He said the next administration would have to "resort to more foreign and domestic borrowing to finance the government's operations and its burgeoning budget deficit."

Bill languishes

Teves, senior vice chair of the House committee on ways and means, said that with the indexation bill languishing in Congress, the government has lost about P51 billion in potential revenues from tobacco manufacturers in the last five years.

"The Department of Finance estimates that the government could have collected P50.94 billion worth of tobacco taxes, or P10.18 billion every year if only Congress allowed the indexation of excise taxes on sin products," Teves said in a statement.

He pointed out that the indexation of "sin taxes" had been factored into the P864.8 billion 2004 national budget. He said the indexation bill was supposed to generate P7 billion in revenues for 2004.

"Where does Congress expect the government to get the P7 billion?" Teves said. "The borrowings and the budget deficit will certainly be bigger this year and the 12th Congress would have to take the rap for that."

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For reservations: Call Diana Calderon (9189407291), Lourdes Casimero (9162385258), Lina Winebrenner (813-2241 or 9193677511), or Iris Trinidad (9206546248).

PNP chief backtracks on 'jueteng'

By Christian V. Esguerra

AFTER claiming the country was 100-percent jueteng-free, Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. yesterday backtracked and admitted it was impossible to completely eradicate the illegal numbers game.

"Our target is 100 percent but there's no such machine that is 100-percent efficient," Ebdane told reporters at Camp Crame.

Ebdane's admission was the first sign of humility in the PNP chief who had vowed to do what critics dismissed as a simply impossible task: root out jueteng in two weeks.

"We cannot do it alone," Ebdane admitted. "We also have to ask other concerned parties to help us."

Ebdane said residents would do police a favor by refraining from patronizing jueteng once and for all.

The Church, he said, should also help people affected by the anti-illegal gambling drive to establish legitimate sources of livelihood.

As of yesterday, Ebdane claimed that the 114,000-strong police force had cleared "98 percent" of the country of the illegal numbers game, arrested 2,222 violators, filed cases against 388 of them, and confiscated around P695,000 in cash bets.

Local religious leaders pegged the compliance rate on the ambitious drive at 91 percent, the official claimed.

Ebdane's declaration of a virtually "jueteng-free" country was met with disbelief if not sarcasm by residents nationwide who called up radio stations to report that the illegal numbers game still thrived in their areas.

Ebdane admitted he received similar complaints even before the New Year.

Ted Failon picks media over politics

LEYTE Rep. Ted Failon (Independent), only on his first term as a congressman, will not seek reelection in the May polls but will return to his broadcasting career despite a recent survey that showed him leading his political rivals.

Failon, a former news anchor of ABS-CBN television and radio commentator on dzMM radio, said he decided against seeking a second term after realizing that the best arena for fighting corruption and introduce new politics was not in the halls of Congress but in the media.

"I would like to assure everyone that we are not giving up on our advocacy for new politics. I maintain that more than patronage politics, our people deserve a just society of equals, where the opportunities for and access to quality education, quality health service and a quality life are open to all on a level playing field," he said.

After a two-and-a-half-year stint as representative of the first district of Leyte, Failon said he discovered that traditional politics was indeed the "godfather of corruption."

Failon stressed that he had no regrets about joining politics but admitted that it was a big disappointment after seeing many of his political allies whom he supported in 2001 turning out to be worse "trapos" than their rivals.

The Leyte solon thanked his constituents for giving him a chance to serve them, adding that his decision not to run for election was not a farewell but a "call to arms."

Failon said he was going back to the media with even "greater zeal and vigor." *Cynthia D. Balana*

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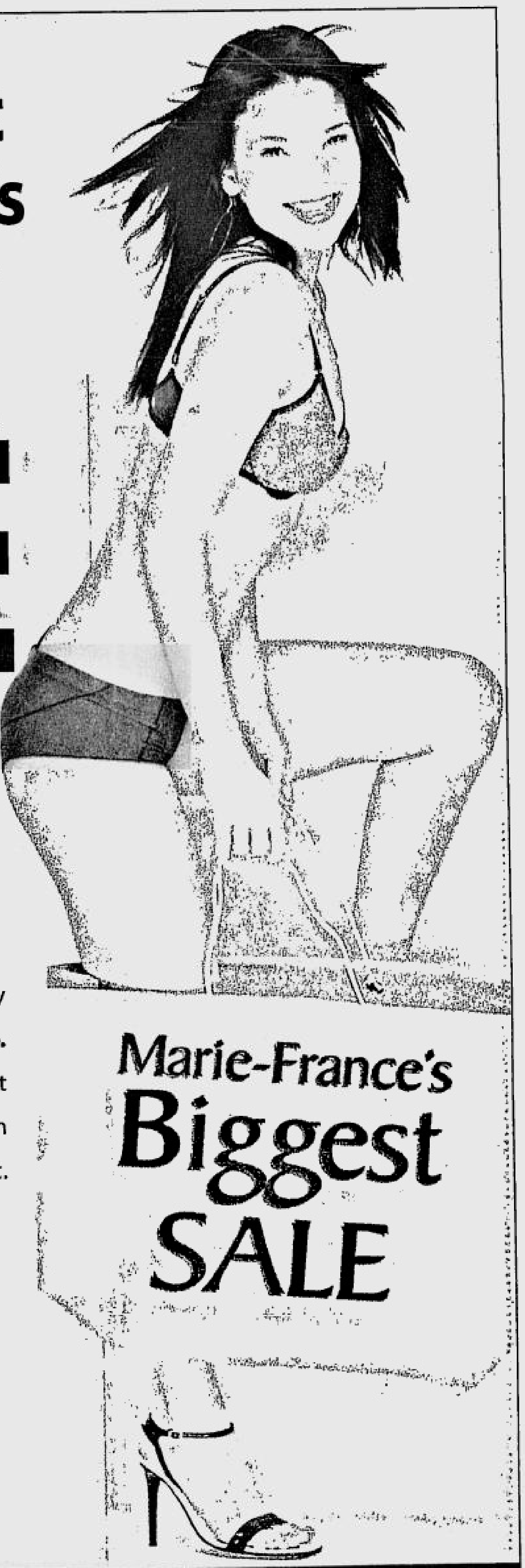

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Independents candidates have edge, says Comelec

By Martin P. Marfil

CANDIDATES running as independents but officially nominated by political parties hold an advantage over their opponents, according to the Commission on Elections chief.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said independent candidates like Sen. Rodolfo Biazon cannot be dislodged from the positions they filed for under the party that nominated them.

"Nobody can stop them. As independents, they cannot be substituted ... if you're an independent, no one can replace you," Abalos said.

Another Comelec official explained that if an independent were to withdraw, his party can nominate a replacement but the substitute should be an independent who has already filed a certificate of candidacy for the position.

"They [independents] have everything to gain," Abalos said.

He said an independent would be able to safeguard his votes as the party which nominated her or him would be able to get the election returns from the various polling places. The independent candidate would not need a nationwide political machinery.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration K4 coalition has a number of independents running under its banner.

Sen. Noli de Castro, who is the President's vice-presidential running mate and was nominated by the ruling Lakas-CMD, listed down his party affiliation as an "independent."

Another administration candidate, former Sen. Orlando Mercado, also filed his candidacy as an independent.

They followed Biazon who filed on Saturday as an independent supported by five parties—the Liberal Party, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino-Aquino faction, Promdi, Aksyon Demokratiko and Reporma.

Biazon was listed as a Lakas-CMD candidate, the sixth party to declare its support for him.

GMA to fight . . .

From page A1

take becoming a transition President and resigning in 2007, then she will do it because we really need to have fundamental changes if we are to progress as a nation," Gonzales said.

Prime minister

But he said the President could run as a member of the new parliament and "bid for the prime ministership."

The President's spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, however, denied that Ms Macapagal had agreed to serve only half of a six-year term, if she wins in May.

"The matter of a transitional presidency at this point is pure speculation. She will tackle Charter change after the May polls," Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said the President's decision to include constitutional reforms in her platform "has nothing to do with the May elections but is out of a sincere desire for change."

Gridlock

Asked why the President would agree to cut in half a potential six more years in Malacañang, Gonzales said: "Love of country. Sometimes we forget this simple element. We think politicians are so selfish."

"When the President decided to run, she was more particular about the need for fundamental political reforms. We are doing our best in husbanding the economy but the political gridlock poses a hindrance," Gonzales said.

But Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, who defected to the administration to become one of its senatorial candidates, said the President's six-year term could not be abbreviated.

Biazon, however, said he would file a resolution for Charter change once he is reelected.

Gonzales said the administration's push for Charter change could alter the atmosphere of the elections. He said the debates would then be on issues such as Charter change instead of personalities.

With her open advocacy for Charter change, the President would likely get the endorsement of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., said a member of Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition.

"I won't be surprised if Mr. Cojuangco will be influenced into supporting the President. He is all for a parliamentary shift," said Isabela Rep. Georgidi Aggabao.

Aggabao said that Charter change and the shift to a parliamentary and federal system of government were "attractive to many if not all NPC congressmen."

"It is consistent with our stand that we need a change in our political system. The present presidential set-up is not good for our country," he said.

Needed for survival

Sought for comment, Cojuangco's nephew Rep. Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said: "Any intellectually honest person who is not a hypocrite knows that Charter change is a must if the country is to survive."

Lakas Rep. Rodolfo Albano said that Ms Macapagal's advocacy for Charter change will greatly enhance her chances of reelection.

"What she presented is a superior platform compared to her challengers who are only making motherhood statements," Albano said.

Mindanao votes

Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles said that the President's advocacy of federalism "ensures that she will be getting the votes of Mindanao."

"Mindanaoans have long clamored for a federal set-up and with President Macapagal's call for federalism, there is no way she's going to lose in Mindanao," Nograles said.

Maceda, Jinggoy in FPJ ticket

From page A1

proclamation of martial law on television, have opted to stay on the KNP senatorial slate.

Estrada did not speak about Poe's controversial choice of Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda as running mate, but apparently he had reconciled himself to his friend's decision. His supporters had attacked Legarda for her role in Estrada's impeachment trial three years ago.

Erap, FPJ agree on changes

The younger Estrada, who is out on bail on plunder charges, filed his certificate of candidacy at 5:41 p.m., accompanied by members of the Estrada family including his mother, Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito Estrada.

He registered as a nominee of the Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino.

Maceda preceded him by about an hour, filing his COC under the KNP.

Both Maceda and the younger Estrada, a former mayor of San Juan, said they filed their COCs after ousted President Estrada and Poe agreed on the changes in the slate.

Seat-warmers

To beat the midnight deadline for the filing of candidacies, the KNP also fielded two virtual unknowns, apparently as seat-warmers who would give way to better known candidates.

The two substitutes were lawyers 57-year-old Reynaldo Bagatsing and 36-year-old Antonio Vitug Jr.

According to their certificates, Vitug is from Floridablanca, Pampanga, while Bagatsing is from Pasay City. Bagatsing did not give his occupation.

Their COCs were filed by Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino lawyers led by Demaree Raval.

FPJ hurt

The former President, asked whether he felt bad that former allies Miriam Defensor-Santiago and John Osmeña were now running under the administration party, said he was not holding it against them.

Noting that Santiago has already criticized Poe, Estrada said: "Well, we cannot blame her. She's a very principled lady ... very bright and she knows the rule of law to the letter. So, it's hard to argue with a person who's brilliant and a lady with a principle."

He admitted that Poe was hurt by Santiago's tirades, but said he had advised Poe to get used to it. Santiago had accused Poe of being a dummy of Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the opposition Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP).

"That's not true," he said. Angara had just visited him in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal. "Even Angara is finding it hard to get access to Poe. Those rumors are not true."

Switching expected

As for Osmeña, Estrada said the senator from Cebu was a "veteran politician" who probably "knows what he's doing." Besides, he said, switching of loyalties is only to be expected in politics.

But he admitted that it would have been ideal if all those in the opposition could have "subordinated their interest to the general interest of the party and love of country."

He admits that party differences happen because "you cannot please everybody."

"Everybody should sacrifice, subordinate their interest for the good of the country," he said. He cited the case of his own son Jinggoy, who he said would rather run for congressman in San Juan against Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Estrada's former executive secretary.

He said even Maceda, who was also reluctant to run, changed his mind only in a bid to help out the opposition coalition.

Estrada denied reports he was forming his own Senate slate, saying their political enemies are merely sowing "intrigues."

Black propaganda

Poe's campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, said the opposition has started to reach out to its supporters, including those identified with Estrada, in a bid to counter what he called "black propaganda."

For one thing, Sotto said, he believed Estrada had been "enlightened" about the "wrong information" being "fed" to him, including reports that Poe was allegedly being controlled by Angara.

In a phone interview, Sotto said Estrada had been fed wrong information about Angara's role in Poe's political set-up.

He said Poe met the other night with leaders of Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino led by its president Horacio "Boy" Morales.

"I think they (PMP leaders) have already reported to (Estrada)," he said, expressing his belief that Estrada had "come to realize that it's FPJ who is making the decisions."

Sotto said Santiago was "completely wrong" for assuming that Angara was behind Poe's decisions.

"Nobody but nobody can tell FPJ what to do," he stressed. *With a report from Christine Avendaño*

RP maid suspected SARS case

From page A1

The 42-year-old woman, identified by the DOH only as "M.D.," and her husband, both residents of Laguna, were taken to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) in Muntinlupa City on Sunday.

Husband got sick, too

M.D., 42, arrived in her hometown of Luisiana from Hong Kong on Dec. 20 to spend the holidays with her family. She developed a fever on Jan. 1, and her husband subsequently got sick as well.

Dr. Luningning Villa, program manager for emerging infection and DOH spokesperson for SARS cases, said M.D. was suffering from fever, cough and muscle pains when she was admitted to a provincial hospital in Laguna.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said M.D. stayed home most of the time since she arrived. She first developed a cough and fever on Dec. 24 and was prescribed antibiotics by a doctor. Over the next five days, her condition worsened, and she went to another doctor who gave her a different type of antibiotics.

Pneumonia worsened

M.D. finally decided to seek admission to a provincial hospital on Jan. 1, where an X-ray showed that she had "bilateral pneumonia," Dayrit said. A second X-ray test was conducted at the RITM on Jan. 4, and it was found that her pneumonia had worsened and spread, he said.

The patient, along with her husband, was transferred to the RITM on Jan. 4, after attendants at the provincial hospital learned that she had just arrived from Hong Kong. The territory was hard-hit last year by an outbreak of the virus that swept out of southern China and is still in the World Health Organization's SARS watch list

The doctor who initially treated her was isolated as a precautionary measure but had shown no symptoms.

Chest x-ray findings showed that M.D. had atypical pneumonia, while her husband had an acute upper respiratory tract infection. They will remain at the RITM for two more weeks.

More tests

Experts have also taken pharyngeal swabs to determine what organism had caused the pneumonia, as well as blood samples from the couple. The specimens will be brought to laboratories abroad once the DOH tests are completed.

"We have to know if this pneumonia comes from SARS," said Villa. "Now she is still a suspected SARS case, not a probable case yet."

Villa said that M.D.'s sickness could be caused by other viruses, such as chlamydia and post-influenza, and not necessarily the SARS corona virus.

"What is important is for us to determine her contacts, how she got [the virus], because this has very important implications ... If she is a confirmed SARS case, then that means the disease is still out there," Villa said.

She noted that of the four suspected SARS cases in the world, only M.D. was not directly working with the virus or illness. The three other cases from Singapore, Taiwan and China were either laboratory workers or persons directly working on the illness.

HK local contacts

The National Epidemiology Center has communicated with Hong Kong officials to trace the contacts of M.D. while she was there. A team of doctors has been sent to Laguna to check the couple's two children, who will be placed under house quarantine, Yolanda Oliveros, a DOH official, told reporters.

Dayrit has "ordered us to convene a five-man panel to study how to label the patient," Oliveros said.

M.D's contacts in Laguna, including the doctors who checked on her and her three children, have volunteered to go on confinement for 14 days, according to the health secretary.

He said the DOH had provided Hong Kong authorities with all the information on M.D.'s case so that they could also trace her contacts in Hong Kong.

"They can trace back and see if they missed a case there," Dayrit said.

Olive lauded the DOH of Health for its immediate and proper action on M.D.'s case, saying that the government showed how ready it was to respond to any SARS cases.

Two Filipinos—a nurse who came home from Canada and her father—had died of SARS last year. They were among 14 SARS cases in the Philippines. The last case of transmission was reported in August last year.

Filipino maids make up the bulk of the domestic workforce in Hong Kong. Two Filipino citizens, including a maid, had died from SARS in the territory.

774 deaths

SARS, which was first detected in 2002, afflicted more than 8,000 people and killed 774 of them when it was spread around the world by travellers. The outbreak forced the Philippines to temporarily ban last year the deployment of its workers to Hong Kong. The moratorium was lifted later when it was declared that SARS was contained in the former British colony.

The government has continued thermal screening in the country's airports even after the Philippines was dropped from the WHO list of SARS-affected countries in May last year.

Fears of a resurgence over the northern winter have been sparked by the infection of two medical researchers, one in Taiwan and the other at a laboratory in Singapore.

Chinese officials are also testing a television producer suspected of carrying a mutated strain of SARS.

Civet cats slaughtered

Authorities in southern China Monday ordered a mass slaughter of civet cats after a local man was confirmed to have the SARS virus, long suspected of being linked to the ferret-like animal.

"A decision has been made from today to close down all wild animal markets in Guangdong," provincial health official Feng Liuxiang said. "We will seek to seal and block all civet cats from other provinces and take action to kill civet cats in Guangdong province."

He estimated that around 10,000 animals, also known as the masked palm civet, would be slaughtered.

Exterminate rats, etc.

An order was also issued for the extermination of rats, flies, mosquitoes and bedbugs. The China Daily Monday said rats found in the apartment of the man with SARS had also tested positive for the virus.

The crackdown came after China's leading SARS expert Zhong Nanshan confirmed that a 32-year-old television journalist from Guangdong had SARS, and linked it to the civet cat—popular for the perceived medicinal properties of its meat.

Zhong said an official announcement upgrading the patient to a confirmed SARS case could come later Monday.

"It's possible the World Health Organization will announce it today ... but the tests showed that he definitely has the SARS coronavirus infection," Zhong, a respiratory disease expert, said at a press conference in Hong Kong.

The WHO said it was still awaiting test results from all the labs and any official announcements would be in consultation with the Ministry of Health. *With* INQUIRER *wires*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 6, 2004
Tuesday after Epiphany

1st Reading: 1 Jn 4:7-10
Gospel: Mk 6:34-44

As Jesus went ashore he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began a long teaching session with them.

It was now getting late, so his disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place and it is now late. You should send the people away and let them go to the farms and villages around here to buy themselves something to eat."

Jesus replied, "You yourselves give them something to eat." They answered, "If we are to give them food, we must go and buy two hundred silver coins' worth of bread." But Jesus said, "You have some loaves: how many? Go and see." The disciples found out and said, "There are five loaves and two fish."

Then he told them to have the people sit down together in groups on the green grass. This they did in groups of hundreds and fifties. And Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish and, raising his eyes to heaven, he pronounced a blessing, broke the loaves and handed them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them.

They all ate and everyone had enough. The disciples gathered up what was left and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces of bread and fish. Five thousand men had eaten there.

Commentary

When someone is complaining, a friend of mine always says things like, "Why don't you fix it yourself?" The effect is like that of turning off a faucet: it stops all complaints instantly! But that isn't why he says it. He is a hands-on person by instinct, so his words have great power to challenge—much more than if he were only being provocative. His kind of language is real and practical, "Do it, and we'll talk about it later!" "Go and see the place yourself!" "Talk to him!" "Let's do it ourselves!" Very invigorating! He once asked another friend of mine a direct question about something, and she replied evasively, "I'll have to think about that." "I'll wait!" he said. And he waited right there!

"You yourselves give them something to eat!" Jesus said. And when they began to do it, they found that it worked. Another time he said to a man who had been lying there for thirty-eight years, "Get up!" And when he went to get up he found he could! There are probably miracles everywhere just ready to pop, if only we would do the thing instead of talking about it.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CIVIL LAW (OBLIGATIONS AND CONTRACTS)—Solidarity liability of employer—Under Article 2180 of the Civil Code an employer may be held solidarily liable for the negligent act of his employee. Thus - Art. 2180. The obligation imposed in Article 2176 is demandable not only for one's own acts or omissions, but also for those of persons for whom one is responsible. x x x Employers shall be liable for the damages caused by their employees and household helpers acting within the scope of their assigned tasks, even though the former are not engaged in any business or industry. x x x The responsibility treated of in this article shall cease when the persons herein mentioned prove that they observed all the diligence of a good father of a family to prevent damage. Whenever an employee's negligence causes damage or injury to another, there instantly arises a presumption juris tantum that the employer failed to exercise diligentissimi patris families in the selection (culpa in eligiendo) or supervision (culpa in vigilando) of its employees. To avoid liability for a quasi-delict committed by his employee, an employer must overcome the presumption by presenting convincing proof that he exercised the care and diligence of a good father of a family in the selection and supervision of his employee. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Ynares-Santiago, First Division, Delsan Transport Lines, Inc. vs C & A Construction, Inc., G. R. No. 156034, October 1, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

Erap boys split GMA party

From page A1

tary Orlando Mercado who filed their certificates of candidacy along with the President yesterday, and former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago for whom a slot has been reserved in the administration party's 12-member senatorial lineup.

Last night, Santiago filed her certificate of candidacy for the Senate at the Comelec under her own party, People's Reform Party. *(See story on Page A1.)*

Threatens core values

Alvarez said there was "a snowballing of opinion" against the senatorial lineup where "compromises that tend to overwhelm our principles were made only to strengthen our position."

Alvarez said this move has "threatened the core values" of the coalition which arose from the impeachment of Estrada. "While we are capable of compromise, there is a point when a compromise becomes overwhelming. We should not capitulate entirely," Alvarez said.

EDWIN BACASMAS

WOMAN of the hour, Miriam Defensor-Santiago, answers questions from the media at her law office in Quezon City. Late last night, she reportedly filed her COC at the Comelec under the administration banner.

PDI PHOTO

SPURNED by his own party, Lakas spokesperson Heherson Alvarez expresses alarm over Ms Macapagal's "overwhelmingly pragmatic" approach to the selection process of her candidates for the Senate.

Contrition first

While he concurred with the President's move toward reconciliation, Alvarez said reconciliation should be premised on "restitution and contrition."

In a phone interview, Alvarez said he received a number of messages and calls from members of the ruling Lakas party and civil society groups who were "very much disturbed" about the President's senatorial lineup.

Not delirious with joy

Exactly the sentiments of Teresita Baltazar of Konsensyang Pilipino, who said that her group was not "delirious with joy" over Ms Macapagal-Arroyo's "realpolitik" and the "compromises" she's getting into for political ends.

Konsensyang Pilipino is a network of 80 organizations that helped install Ms Macapagal into power at Edsa II.

Trying to understand

"We understand the politics of reconciliation, but there should be admission of guilt and justice," Baltazar said. "Let's not compromise too much."

According to Baltazar, they are trying to understand why she (Ms Macapagal) had to make the hard decision because "politics is addition."

"Nongovernment organizations have the luxury to be principled, but we must also be mature enough to understand that politics cannot be black or white. We have to look at the bigger picture," she said, noting that the President may have her reasons for taking in opposition candidates.

Alvarez pointed out that while the political opposition did not initially want to include Estrada's son, Jinggoy, in its lineup, the administration party had willingly embraced figures in the Estrada administration.

Herrera, too

Alvarez cited ex-Sen. Ernesto Herrera, who joined the LDP faction of Sen. Edgardo Angara to be in Fernando Poe's ticket because Herrera was not even considered as a senatorial candidate of Lakas even if he is Lakas vice president for the Visayas.

After being squeezed out of a place in the administration ticket, Alvarez said he would remain as spokesperson of Lakas although he has kept his options open (including running for the Senate as an independent).

"I'm in a state of dilemma. I'm exceedingly overwhelmed and disturbed by what is happening to the party's choice," Alvarez told the INQUIRER.

Sidelined by own party

Alvarez was reportedly sidetracked by a core group of his own partymates allegedly headed by Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay and presidential liaison officer Gabriel Claudio.

According to Alvarez, his group rose against the people who defended the alleged corruption and plunder by the Estrada presidency during Edsa II, thus, it was not right to just accept them as if nothing happened.

"Where is the party stand now? We are a party of Christian and Muslim democrats. I've not made compromises that exceedingly compromise my values and principles. I've not done this in my public life," Alvarez said.

Baltazar said that she did not hold it against the President for picking Osmeña, Mercado and possibly Santiago to be among the administration's senatorial candidates. "As President, she has to reach out," she said.

To vote outside GMA ticket

"It's the prerogative of politicians to play their game, but as for me I'm for GMA and a few of her candidates," she said, adding that unlike the last senatorial elections when they campaigned for 13-0 in favor of Ms Macapagal's candidates, she said this time they will carefully choose their candidates and will vote for those outside the administration Senate slate.

No way

"The image of her telling the Edsa Tres crowd to attack ("sugod") the Palace is still fresh in our minds," she said.

Asked about Osmeña, she exclaimed: *"Dios ko day!"*(Oh, my God, girl.)

No to Noli

She said that even vice presidential candidate Noli de Castro does not enjoy strong support from civil society groups.

"There could be somebody better," she said.

But she described reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon as a "good catch." Biazon was an opposition stalwart until he, too, joined the Macapagal team.

While the civil society groups reject Santiago, the Edsa Tres force People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP) remains supportive even if she switches camps.

"We will support Miriam even if she goes to the other camp. We know her position relative to our cause. She has not abandoned us," said PMAP national president Lope Santos.

'Pathetic'

By Dona Pazzibugan

"PATHETIC," was how presidential candidate Raul Roco's camp described the unabashed switching of sides in both the administration and opposition camps.

Roco's running mate and spokesperson, ex-Tarlac Rep. Herminio "Hermie" Aquino, said the presidential and senatorial campaign had "degenerated" into a "brawl."

"It's pathetic. *Palipat-lipat, nagsusungkitan, agawan* (Switching, pirating). He expressed exasperation at the "strange mix" of political personalities in the tickets of President Macapagal-Arroyo and opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Roco fielded mostly neophytes in his seven-man senatorial ticket. Reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon was previously in Roco's ticket, but at the last minute bolted to the pro-administration Liberal Party.

Neophytes on ticket

Roco's ticket consists of former solicitor general Frank Chavez, former securities and exchange chief Perfecto Yasay Jr., broadcaster Jay Sonza, former National Food Authority chief Edno Joson, bowling champion Bong Coo and lawyers Mel "Batas" Mauricio and Nicanor Gatmaytan Jr., who is blind.

Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico agreed with the observation of Santiago that Sen. Loren Legarda, herself a former ally of Ms Macapagal in Lakas, was an "opportunist" because she agreed to run with the opposition and campaign with the people whom she had fought against during Estrada's impeachment trial.

Mishmash

On the other hand, party-list Rep. Renato Magtubo of Partido ng Manggagawa described the 2004 national elections as the "year of *ungguyan*"(monkey-shines) because of the "mishmash" in the senatorial lists of both the administration and the opposition.

Said Magtubo: "We are just five days in the year of the monkey, yet, the 'ungguyan' among traditional politicians is already very apparent."

Magtubo also cited Herrera who "effortlessly coalesce" with Estrada despite his participation in the latter's downfall

Not for principles

A top businessman, Raul T. Concepcion, said that the way the political teams have been formed, some candidates have sacrificed their principles for their own political ambition.

"What we are seeing are candidates that run not for the purpose of serving the people but to get elected no matter the cost," Concepcion said.

Miriam keeps them ...

From page A1

position Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino—obviously a ploy to keep the door open for substitution before Jan. 15, the last day for making such replacements.

Santiago, who is being wooed by both opposition and administration camps, said she received a "warm" welcome from President Macapagal-Arroyo, a much better reception than she got from the opposition which she said ignored her when it was forging its own lineup.

She said she would be meeting Estrada today, possibly to talk about her joining the opposition.

"I am returning to politics contrary to my own personal desires, I believe it's a constructive way of dealing with my grief," she said, explaining why she decided to run after she had vowed to give up politics when her son died in November. *Martin P. Marfil*

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Musharraf, Vajpayee meet in peace bid

ISLAMABAD—The leaders of India and Pakistan met on Monday for the first time in more than two years, seeking to cast aside the enmity that took their nuclear-armed countries to the brink of war in 2002.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf talked for an hour and five minutes on the sidelines of a South Asia summit, according to Pakistan's Information Minister Sheikh Rashid.

"Detailed discussions were held," he said, adding that the two men had discussed disputed Kashmir among other things. "The meeting was held in a good atmosphere."

"Right now the knots are being unraveled for a declaration," Rashid told Pakistan state television, speaking in Urdu but using the English word "declaration."

Vajpayee and Musharraf smiled and shook hands before taking their seats. Facing forward about a meter apart, they then turned to chat to each other for the benefit of the cameras before the meeting got under way properly.

Speaking before the meeting, Vajpayee, on his first visit to Pakistan in almost five years, called for talks between the neighbors to resolve disputes that have plagued relations since independence from Britain in 1947.

"It is necessary that the two countries have adequate representation and that dialogue goes on continuously, that we understand each other's difficulties and find a way out together," he said in a speech.

Pakistan has been pushing for an agreement to start a "structured" dialogue over Kashmir, and foreign ministry spokesperson Masood Khan called Monday's meeting "a good beginning."

Vajpayee's meeting with Musharraf, who survived two assassination attempts last month, was held under heavy security on the sidelines of a summit of the seven-nation South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation.

The other nations at the summit, which is discussing ways to integrate their economies, are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Diplomats said Vajpayee's meeting with Musharraf was a step forward in the process of rebuilding relations.

"It really is a fundamental step forward when you look at how far we've come in the last few months," said one Western diplomat. "But the big question is whether they have moved any closer to each other on the core issue of Kashmir."

Kashmir is the main obstacle to progress between the two countries. It has been divided between the rivals since a war that followed independence. The bitter dispute has cost tens of thousands of lives since then.

Two years ago the neighbors came to the brink of another war over Kashmir after an attack on the parliament in New Delhi that India blamed on Pakistan-backed militants.

But in April, the 79-year-old Vajpayee launched a final bid for peace in his lifetime. Since then full diplomatic relations have been resumed and some travel links have been reinstated. *Reuters*

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Blair visits Iraq; Osama tape aired

BAGHDAD—British Prime Minister Tony Blair touched down in southern Iraq in a surprise morale-boosting visit to troops Sunday as the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television network aired an audiotape attributed to Osama bin Laden.

In the tape, Bin Laden appeared to refer to the Dec. 13 capture of Saddam Hussein and at least one other recent development.

In the new tape, the speaker said to be Bin Laden warned that unless the United States was stopped, it would go on occupying Saudi Arabia and the entire oil-rich Gulf region after Iraq.

"There can be no dialogue with the occupiers except with weapons," the speaker said.

The tape was aired shortly after Blair defended the Iraq invasion in a visit to British troops based around the southern port of Basra Sunday.

In separate developments, US troops arrested a senior Kurdish official in the ethnic tinderbox of Kirkuk and an American soldier was injured in another attack.

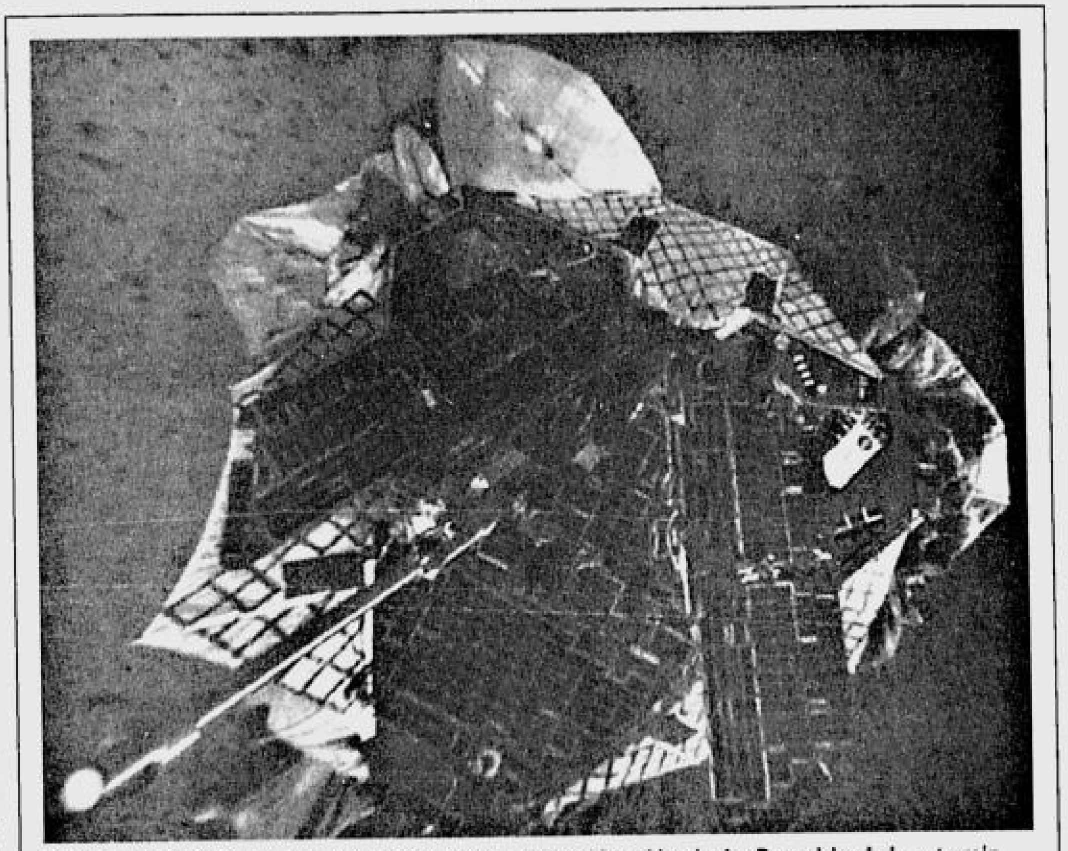
Iraqi police meanwhile said five of their men were wounded and a bystander killed in separate incidents when US troops retaliated to continued fierce guerrilla assaults on coalition forces.

Blair, who had just ended a holiday in Egypt, said the war that ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein nine months ago was necessary to make the world safe from regimes coveting weapons of mass destruction.

"If we had backed away... we would never have been able to confront this threat in the other countries where it exists," Blair told British troops.

The brief trip, during which he also met top US civil administrator in Iraq Paul Bremer, was Blair's second to the country since the US-led invasion last March.

At home, the British prime minister is still dogged by charges that key intelligence on Iraq and WMD had been exaggerated or "sexed up" in the countdown to war. *AFP*



TOUCHDOWN IN MARS—This mosaic image released Jan. 4 by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, taken by the navigation camera on the Mars Exploration Rover Spirit has been reprocessed to project a clear overhead view of the rover on the surface of Mars. AFP

Rover calls home from Mars, beams back clear color photos

PASADENA, Calif.—The US robotic probe Spirit beamed panoramic color images of unprecedented clarity back to Earth on Sunday after establishing direct contact with Nasa scientists guiding its search for ancient signs of life on Mars.

The successful deployment of the rover's lollipop-shaped main antenna cuts the delay in communications between the rover and Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena to about nine minutes from the hours needed to relay signals through two Mars orbiters, flight director Jason Willis said.

At 9:20 p.m. PST (0520 GMT Monday), the control room at JPL erupted in cheers as test signals showed that the rover had correctly located Earth in the martian sky and had positioned the main, "high gain" antenna correctly.

"This is just fantastic. We got the high gain antenna to work on the very first try," Mark Adler, Spirit mission manager, said. "We are ready for the rest of the mission."

Spirit began transmitting science and telemetry data, as well as the mission's first color images of the martian landscape from the rover's high-resolution panoramic cameras.

"I expect to see a lot of good stuff on this pass," Adler said, adding that scientists planned to "wake up" the rover four or five times during the night to calibrate temperature sensors that may have failed.

The mission fell behind on Sunday as scientists ran out of time to cut cables that tied the folded-up rover to battery and electronics systems on its landing pad, an omission that may delay its three-stage "stand-up" by one martian day, or "sol," about 40 minutes longer than an Earth day, Adler said.

The team also may try to retract airbags that cushioned the rover's landing but now block its path to the planet's surface, adding another sol to the time needed to prepare the robotic rover for its three-month trek across Mars' surface to look for ancient evidence of life-giving water in the rocks and soil.

The rover's "stand-up" was scheduled for sols three through five, after more cables bolting the rover's wheels and robotic arm are cut by pyrotechnic blades, and its six wheels are moved to their correct positions, Adler said.

Once the rover is freed, scientists will "do a little drive" on top of the lander and turn it to drive off the lander—about sol eight or nine.

The team of scientists and engineers that guided Spirit to a bouncy but textbook-perfect landing pored over data beamed back by the rover on Sunday to learn more about its descent, landing and exact position on the hostile planet. *Reuters*

China confirms SARS case, to kill civet cats

BEIJING—China on Monday confirmed that a 32-year-old television producer in southern Guangdong has SARS, the country's first case since a world epidemic was declared over in July.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome originated in Guangdong in November 2002 and went on to kill 800 people around the world, including about 350 in China, bringing Asian tourism and air industries almost to a halt.

"It was confirmed after repeated tests by Guangdong Center for Disease Control and the China Center for Disease Control and the result was reviewed and in line with tests of two WHO SARS laboratories," the Health Ministry said in a statement.

Seventeen of 81 people who had had close contact with the patient were being held in quarantine, it added.

The World Health Organization said it would issue a statement shortly which also confirmed the SARS case. Last week, it said even if the case were confirmed, it would not be grounds to consider a China travel warning.

In a campaign to stop another mass SARS outbreak, China announced a plan to kill thousands of civet cats and try to wipe out rats and cockroaches.

Guangdong planned to kill about 10,000 civets and to close wild-animal markets to eliminate a possible source of the disease, state media said. *Reuters*

A CHEF chops cooked field rats at a wild game restaurant in Guangzhou, the capital city of China's southern province of Guangdong on Jan. 5. REUTERS

BA pilots see flight holdups as US warning

LONDON—British airline pilots see the cancelation and delays affecting British Airways Flight 223 to Washington as a "shot across the bows" by the US authorities exasperated by BA's reluctance to accept armed on-board marshals, the main pilots' union Balpa said Monday.

The daily flight from Heathrow to Washington Dulles was canceled Thursday and Friday due to fears of a terrorist attack, and left hours late on Saturday and Sunday after the US authorities called for extra security checks.

Jim McAuslan, Balpa's general secretary, told The Times: "There is a growing feeling among our members that Flight 223 was grounded as a shot across the bows by the Americans.

"We are concerned it was a political decision to get BA to accept air marshals. Until it does, the US may make life so difficult that the passengers start switching to other airlines."

McAuslan accepted that there had been intelligence reports about terrorist threats, but said the decision to cancel or delay the flight four days in a row had raised doubts among his members.

Mike Street, BA's director of operations, said in a message to staff this weekend: "We will only accept the deployment of an armed police officer on one of our flights if we are satisfied that safety would be enhanced to an acceptable level for the flight to take place.

"If there is security information about a particular flight that gives us cause for concern then we will not operate that flight."

Officials of Balpa were to meet Monday with British Airways management. The Times said the union had signed an agreement Wednesday with another British airline, Virgin, on the presence of armed marshals on board certain flights to the United States.

Under the accord the captain of the plane must be informed of the presence of a marshal, of who he is, where he is sitting, and must be able to keep in permanent contact with him. The captain must also remain the boss on board. *AFP*

OOPS! Yesterday's page A10 head, "UK flight lands safely in US" carried instead a story about the capture of Colombia rebel leader Ricardo Palmera. We are very sorry for the mix-up.—Ed

US to fingerprint, take photos of foreign visitors

WASHINGTON—Foreigners entering US airports and seaports from all but 28 nations will have their fingerprints scanned and their photographs taken this week as part of a new program to tighten border security.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge was to be in Atlanta Monday morning to help launch the program at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Other top federal officials will be at other airports across the nation to help draw attention to the new policy.

All 115 US airports that handle international flights and 14 major seaports are covered by the program, under which Customs officials can instantly check an immigrant or visitor's criminal background.

Called US-Visit, or US Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology, the program will check an estimated 24 million foreigners each year, though some will be repeat visitors.

The only exceptions will be visitors from 28 countries—mostly European nations whose citizens are allowed to come to the United States for up to 90 days without visas.

Inkless fingerprints will be taken and checked instantly against a national digital database for criminal backgrounds and any terrorist lists. The process will be repeated when the foreigners leave the country as an extra security measure and to ensure they complied with visa limitations.

Homeland Security spokesperson Bill Strassberger said once screeners become proficient, the extra security will take only 10 to 15 seconds per person. Foreign travelers also will continue to pass through regular Customs points and answer questions.

Photographs will be used to help create a database for law enforcement. The travel data is supposed to be securely stored and made available only to authorized officials on a need-to-know basis.

A similar program is to be installed at 50 land border crossings by the end of next year, Strassberger said.

Brazilian police started fingerprinting and photographing Americans arriving at Sao Paulo's airport last week in response to the new US measures.

Brazil's foreign ministry has requested that Brazilians be removed from the US list.

"At first, most of the Americans were angered at having to go through all this, but they were usually more understanding once they learned that Brazilians are subjected to the same treatment in the US," Wagner Castilho, press officer for the federal police in Sao Paulo, said of those arriving at Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport last Thursday.

The US system consists of a small box that digitally scans fingerprints and a spherical computer camera that snaps pictures. It will be used for the estimated 24 million foreigners traveling on tourist, business and student visas who enter through an airport or seaport.

The new system will gradually phase out a paper-based system that Congress mandated be modernized following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. *AP*

Singaporeans face prison if their maids fall to death

SINGAPORE—Employers could be jailed if their maids fall out of high-rise apartments while working, the government said Monday.

Singapore, an island republic of 4 million people, has about 140,000 foreign domestic workers, mostly from impoverished neighboring countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia. They often wind up overworked and have little personal freedom.

Abuse of maids has become a well publicized issue, particularly the tragedy of workers who plunge to their deaths while hanging out laundry or cleaning windows.

Most Singaporeans live in high-rise apartments. The Ministry of Manpower said last month that 99 domestic workers fell from buildings between January 1999 and June 2003.

"If you tell her to climb out the window and she falls, I will take you to task because it is reckless abandonment," Ng Eng Hen, the acting manpower minister, was quoted as saying in the Straits Times. The ministry confirmed his comments Monday.

From January 2001 to June 2003, Singapore jailed 22 people for abusing their maids, Ng said, adding that he would jail "twice or three times the number" to halt the mistreatment of domestic workers.

In a separate statement, the ministry said it took a "serious view of employers who ill-treat, exploit, neglect or endanger foreign domestic workers.

The statement said beginning this year, first-time employers will undergo a mandatory orientation program to "inculcate a greater sense of responsibility" toward their domestic help.

All new maids will also soon be required to attend a course informing them of their right to refuse certain jobs, it said.

"Your employer cannot ask you to do unreasonable things and you need not comply," Ng said.

Critics have said the government must do more to protect maids' rights and to provide adequate safety training. *AP*

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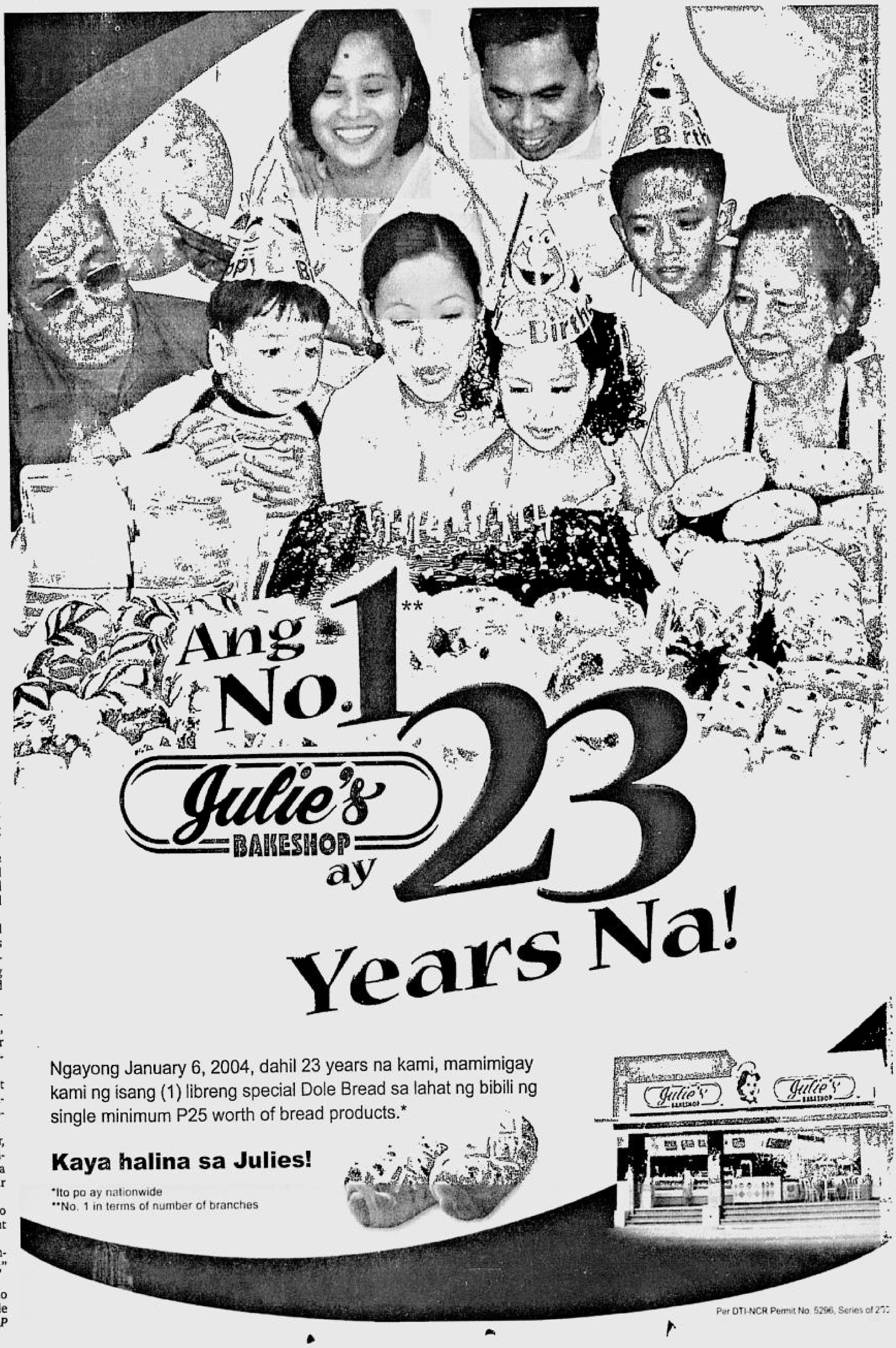

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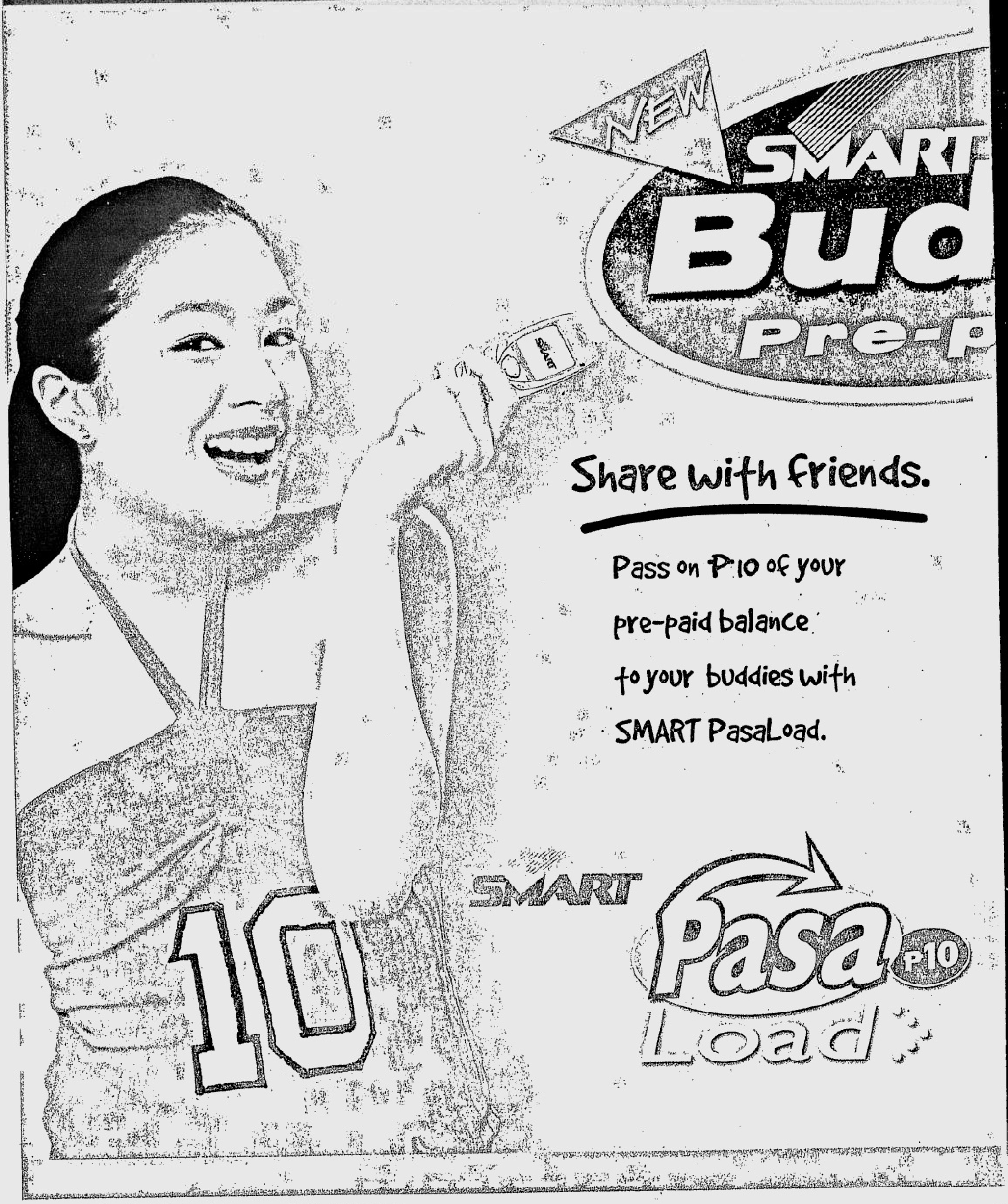

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Theater of the absurd

EDITORIAL

PHILIPPINE politics is the theater of the absurd. Where in the world can you find a country where the leading candidate for president (according to the latest surveys) is a high school dropout with no experience in government and public administration?

Where in the world can you find a country where the most important factor in choosing candidates for the highest positions in the land is popularity and not competence or experience or educational background?

Where in the world can you find a country where candidates for public office switch parties as easily as they change their everyday clothes? Where opportunism, and not adherence to principles, is the rule in running for public office?

Where in the world can you find a country where the election campaign is transformed into a circus, stage show and snake-oil salesman's pitch all rolled into one? The election period is the time when most candidates, in their effort to win votes, will make fools of themselves, delivering repetitive speeches, singing off key, dancing with two left feet and resorting to various gimmicks to strengthen name recall.

Philippine politics is amusing—and confusing. Confusing was the word used by Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos to describe the political situation when she dropped out of the opposition's senatorial slate. To one who is not used to the twists and turns and absurdities of Philippine politics, the recent developments will truly be confusing.

Sen. Loren Legarda was supposed to have promoted unity when she joined Fernando Poe Jr.'s ticket of reconciliation. To the contrary, her presence in the ticket is promoting disunity and discord. Joseph Estrada's loyalists are rejecting her. Former Sen. Miriam Defensor cannot abide her presence and was last reported to be joining the administration ticket. What? A staunch defender of Estrada joining the slate of the person that replaced him?

Others who have performed political somersaults are opposition Sen. John Osmeña and Estradas' defense secretary, Orlando Mercado, who are joining the administration's senatorial ticket; and former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, co-author of the impeachment complaint against Estrada, who has joined the opposition ticket that Estrada is expected to endorse. Sen. Rodolfo Biazon is performing a double somersault (it would earn him extra points if this were a gymnastic contest, or applause if this were a circus), first saying that he was joining Raul Roco's ticket and now jumping over to the administration slate. Intriguing? Confusing? Amusing? Or all of the above?

Now let's look at the presidential candidates. There's the incumbent President who has performed more policy flip-flops than a gymnast or acrobat, all in the name of political expediency. She has also been tainted with charges of corruption. There's the movie actor, a high school dropout who has had no experience in government and politics and who has so far not given a hint about his program of government.

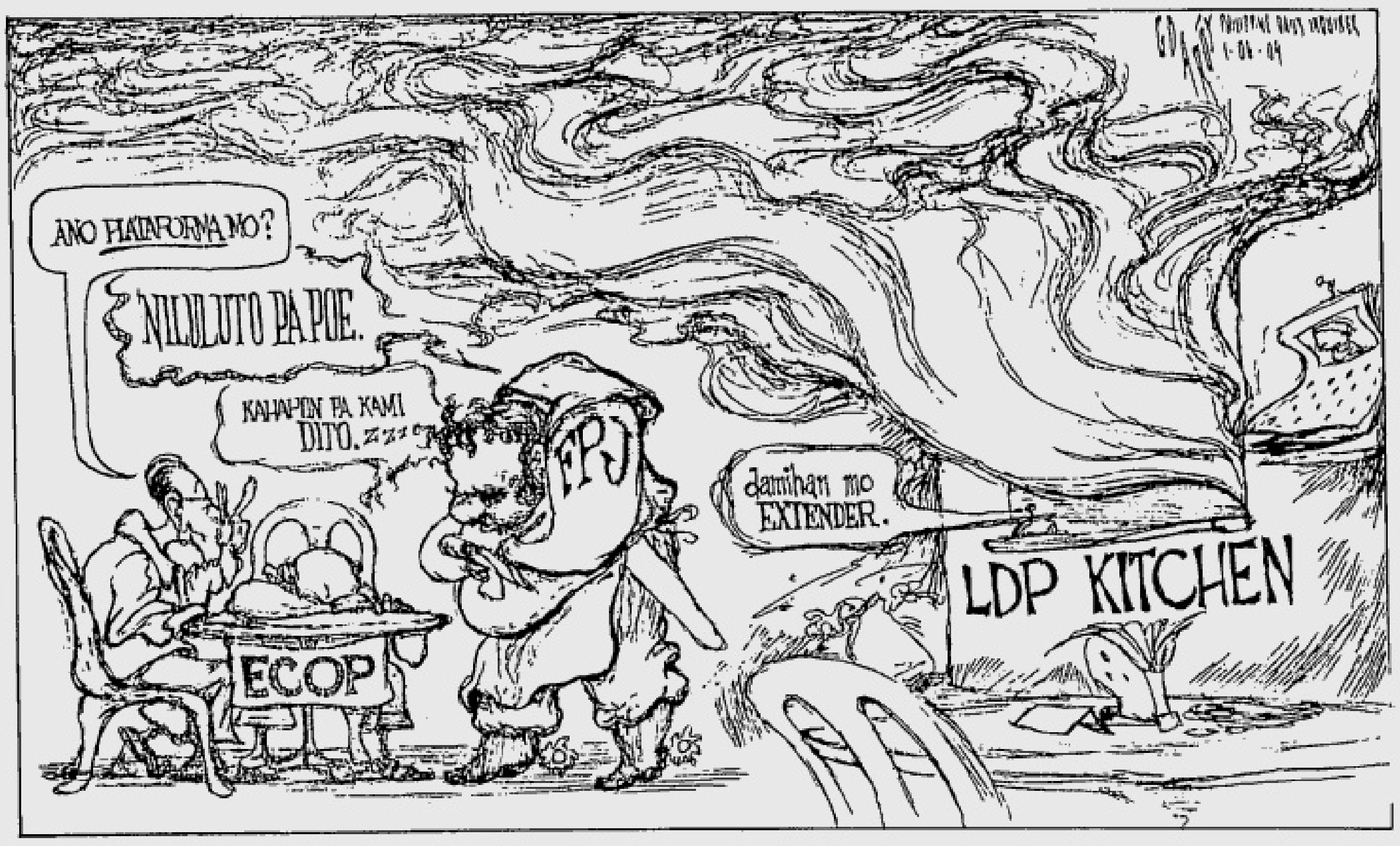
There's the former chief of the Philippine National Police, one of the junior enforcers of the martial-law regime, who faces some human rights cases, including the Kuratong Baleleng massacre case. And there's the former senator and former education secretary, a lawyer and intellectual, who is losing credibility and supporters because of his failure to present a credible running mate and a full senatorial ticket. He is said to be the "lesser evil" or the "least evil" of the four candidates.

Have we come to this, that we have to choose "the least evil" and not the best and the brightest from a field of the worthiest representatives of the Filipino race?

In about a month, the big show will begin. Or, to use another metaphor, the barrier at the starting gate will be lifted, and the candidates will be off and running. This is a race not for the faint of heart nor for one weak in organization or short of funds.

Money—lots of it—can help insure victory at the polls. One of the great absurdities of the presidential race is that candidates will be spending hundreds of millions, even billions, of pesos to occupy for six years a position that pays only P50,000 a month. How will the winner recoup the amount spent, or repay his or her major contributors?

But in this big show, the last laugh will always be on the spectators. In this theater of the absurd, it seems that it is always the audience (read: the people) who will ultimately pay for it all. In terms of political and moral compromises that will be made and in terms of toleration of the culture of corruption.



The senatorial candidates: strong and weak

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

HAD Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Sen. John Osmeña and Ilocos Norter Rep. Imee Marcos not bolted the KNP (Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino) senatorial slate, it would have had at least seven sure winners out of a possible 12. Besides the three, the others are Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and former Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Francisco Tatad, and former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim. With Santiago, Osmeña and Marcos out, that makes only four. As of this writing, we still don't know who will replace them, and whether they are as strong as these three. By the time this comes out, the lineups will have been completed, since yesterday was the deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy.

We also don't know yet who would be in the administration senatorial ticket, how strong or weak they would be. We already know the members of the incomplete Senate slate of former Sen. Raul Roco, all of them *ampaw*. Sen. Ping Lacson has no Senate slate or a running mate yet. So it is difficult to predict, at this time, the makeup of the incoming Senate.

The five others in the announced KNP ticket are Rep. Didagen Dilangalen and former National Youth Commission Chair Amina Rasul to represent the Muslim sector, former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, Erap supporter Jamby Madrigal, and Lacson supporter Carlos Padilla.

Rasul and Madrigal were losers in previous senatorial polls. Dilangalen is not very well known outside Mindanao. Herrera has been out of the limelight for a long time, and KNP supporters are not happy with the inclusion of Padilla who is a leader of Lacson in the fight for the LDP presidential nomination. Padilla is the only personal choice of FPJ, his *kumpare*, but it is possible that he may still be replaced.

Although he is in the FPJ lineup, Padilla told me over the telephone that he would campaign with Lacson. He pointed out that although he and Lacson are happy that he is included in the KNP ticket, he did not ask for it.

But Padilla's inclusion could be a masterstroke by FPJ. It would be an opening for the eventual unification of LDP.

Padilla passed the phone to Rep. Butz Aquino who said that Padilla could be the key to that unification. He can be the mediator between the two opposing camps.

Lacson wants a one-on-one talk with FPJ, but the latter is avoiding it because, according to his supporters, he knows Lacson will ask for concessions and FPJ does not want to be committed to deals and appointments long before he becomes president. FPJ, they said, really wants to be a different president. He doesn't want to be like the traditional politicians. He doesn't want to be associated or even be seen with *trapos*. And that is why ex-Sen. Ernesto Maceda, as *trapo* as any *trapo* can be, and Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta were not included in his ticket. Jinggoy Estrada, although Erap's son, was scratched out not only because of the plunder case pending against him but also because his mother, Sen. Loi Ejercito, is already in the Senate.

Jinggoy asked for my opinion on that when we bumped into each other at the wake of Inday Badiday and I told him the same thing: it wouldn't look nice for him and his mother to be in the same Senate. I told him to wait until 2007 when his mother's term expires.

But Senators Ramon Revilla and Robert Jaworski are also father and son, Jinggoy protested.

Jaworski is not Revilla's son but his son-in-law. That's not the same, I said. I didn't say this then, but I'm saying it now: Revilla and Jaworski are a good example of why members of the same family should not be together in the Senate. The two of them have not contributed anything to the work of that body. And if we also elect Revilla's son Bong to the Senate, he would most likely do the same thing: nothing.

I think it is Bong Revilla's senatorial ambition that forced Jinggoy to want to run for the Senate, too. The two used to be friends and *barkada*. But during the impeachment trial of President Estrada, Bong spoke against Jinggoy's father and the latter was hurt. And that is probably the reason Bong was assured of a berth in the administration ticket as his reward.

Anyway, Bong's inclusion in the GMA ticket, and the choice of Noli de Castro as her running mate, will blunt criticisms on FPJ being a dropout. Bong is also a dropout and De Castro, like Bong's father, is a member of the "committee on silence" in the Senate.

Among the others in the administration senatorial slate is Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan. Obet is already a two-time loser for the Senate. This could be his last hurrah. Will he make it this time?

Also definitely in the administration ticket is Gov. Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), to represent the Muslim sector. The administration needs a strong Muslim candidate since FPJ is very strong among the Muslims because of his movies which portray the Muslims favorably.

The others are reelectionist Senators Robert Barbers and Robert Jaworski (thus, if Jaworski and Bong Revilla are both elected, we would have two brothers-in-law in the Senate), former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid (the administration has recruited movie actors to counteract FPJ's popularity), former Defense Secretary Orly Mercado, lawyer Pia Cayetano, daughter of the late Sen. Renato Cayetano, and presidential adviser Heherson Alvarez.

Devil to pay

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

I MYSELF was wondering how long it would take before Loren Legarda reaped the whirlwind.

Of course, party-switching is not unknown in this country; it is the rule rather than the exception. Politicians routinely embrace other parties, normally those in power or who stand to be so, whose principles are little known to their original members anyway, if they have any—principles or original members. It reminds me of what the Earl of Sandwich said to John Wilkes: "I am convinced, Mr. Wilkes, that you will die either of a pox or on the gallows." To which Wilkes replied, "It depends, my lord, on whether I embrace your principles or your mistress." In this country, there's precious little difference between embracing principles and embracing mistresses; you are likely to die from the pox or the hangman's noose from one or the other.

But Loren's case is a little extreme in the indiscriminate embrace department. She didn't just switch from one party to another, she switched from one cause to another. One is tempted to add, such as we are able to appreciate causes, but the circumstances were dramatic enough for us to have appreciated them three years ago. What made Edsa II possible was also, if not above all, images, and no image came more powerfully from Erap's impeachment trial than Loren bursting into tears and Tessie Oreta leaping into dance after the Senate voted not to open the second envelope showing Erap to be Jose Velarde. The contrast between the reactions of the two women was staggering, and no telenovela (which the impeachment trial was in many respects, accounting for its enormous popularity) could have ended on a higher, or more strident, note if its scriptwriters had wracked their brains to find one.

Few remember the arguments that were put out at the time, many remember the image of the crying princess and the dancing queen. That was one of the things that drove the populace out of their living rooms, or wherever their TV sets were, into the streets, or wherever the lightning rallies took place. That was what catapulted Loren to a position where she stood to have a crack at higher office. But now the same image has come back to haunt.

It has because Loren has joined the very camp that rejoiced over Tessie's lambada. That camp has never forgiven Hilario Davide for sitting in judgment over its favorite president and swearing in Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in his place, and only recently tried to impeach him presumably for usurping their favorite president's favorite pastime, which is stealing. Loren isn't just asking them not to get back at her, she is asking them to support her. That is quite a demand. Well, Ronald Lumbao's boys aren't going along, notwithstanding that they love Ang Panday, who quite incidentally has not been able to hammer unity among the opposition or save that house from disrepair.

It is hard to understand Loren's arguments for joining the opposition to begin with. Her stated reason for leaving Lakas was that she could no longer abide it on moral grounds. It had become the evil she fought against at Edsa II. But if so, why join the evil one fought against at Edsa II? Why not become independent and fight both evils? She says she needs to be realistic too: the opposition offers the means for her to win, which in turn offers the means for her to serve the country better. Those two reasons cancel out each other. You cannot reject Lakas on moral grounds and join the opposition on pragmatic grounds. If you are going to be pragmatic anyway, why leave Lakas at all? Why not stick it out with it, run under its banners, and serve the country if you win?

All of it merely bolsters the public perception that the reason Loren left Lakas was not moral but pragmatic: She would not have been picked as GMA's running mate because they were both women, something this country presumably would not abide. Her reasons are pragmatic all the way. Many Filipinos, of course, would have another word for pragmatic.

I've liked Loren in the past because of her positions, which I've often found progressive, notably her role in brokering peace talks with the rebels, quite apart from her role in the impeachment trial. But I draw the line here. The notion that she was personally picked by FPJ little detracts from the fact that she has joined the camp that brought Erap to power and that intends to bring FPJ to power. FPJ is part and parcel of Erap's camp, the so-called opposition that is opposed only to having been shoved out of power. FPJ's senatorial list shows it. It is pretty much the same cast that brought you the blockbuster, or nation-buster, "Mr Estrada Goes to Malacañang."

Over time, I've learned to cringe each time I hear people say they will bargain with the devil himself to get to a position where they can serve the country. Bargains with the devil preclude serving the country: you will not find it in the contract even if you look at the fine print. It is not only the country that loses from such bargains, it is those who make them. To this day, I liked Nene Pimentel better when he was fighting Juan Ponce Enrile after having lost to him because of *dagdag-bawas* than when he ran side by side with him under Erap in 1998, determined not be cheated again. Pimentel won the elections, and lost himself. I liked my friends better when they were struggling against Erap, often with little hope, to bring peace and justice to this country than when they joined GMA, often with little remembrance of where they came from, and brought war and destruction to this country. They gained the world, but lost their souls.

I liked Loren better then when she was crying than now when she is grinning from ear to ear.

Decimating the opposing groups

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE ADMINISTRATION party's move to recruit some big names from other political parties was clearly an attempt to decimate those groups. When it pirated Sen. John Osmeña and former Sen. Miriam Santiago from the LDP's senatorial lineup, that virtually crippled Fernando Poe Jr. When the administration pirated Sen. Rodolfo Biazon from Raul Roco's senatorial line-up, that could have been the final blow to the latter's presidential ambitions (the first blow was his drafting of a virtual political unknown, former Tarlac Gov. Hermie Aquino, as his running mate).

* * *

But the unfortunate side effect was to bump off a good man: former senator and environment secretary and now presidential adviser for overseas Filipinos Heherson Alvarez. He was promised a slot and many groups have begun mobilizing for him since then, for he has strong grassroots support among farmers, fisherfolk, environmentalists, etc. Obviously the President's advisers pushing for a "reconciliation" between Edsa II and "Edsa III" elements were willing to sacrifice the person who began the impeachment process against Erap. But Alvarez is a politician who operates on the basis of principles, and yesterday, as this column was being written, he was poised to file his candidacy as an independent, even though the FPJ and Roco groups were calling him all day long so that he decided to turn off his cell phone. Alvarez may have been dropped by the administration party, but he may have fallen into the arms of an appreciative people.

* * *

A few months ago in Seattle, about 100 Filipino-Americans showed up at the Filipino community center, most of them in *barong* and Filipina dress, to take their oath of allegiance to the Philippines and regain the Filipino citizenship they had given up many years ago. One of them was a wheelchair-bound man in his mid-40s who looked quite ill, with dark rings under his eyes. He was accompanied by his Caucasian wife and children. As he took his oath before Filipino Consul General Delia Menez-Rosal, he began to cry and said in an audible voice, "At last, before I die I can be a Filipino again." His emotionalism was contagious. As they raised their right hand before Menez-Rosal, almost everyone was in tears, including the consul herself. It only shows, she said, that no matter how long the Filipino has been in the United States, he remains a Pinoy at heart who loves his native land.

* * *

The Washingtonians were among the earliest Fil-Ams to take advantage of the enactment of the Dual Citizenship Law, which is open to natural-born Pinoys who have acquired foreign citizenship, and its companion legislation, the Overseas Absentee Voting Law. Both were enacted by Congress last August and took effect last September. Over dinner at her beautiful official residence in San Francisco's exclusive residential area, the Sea Cliff area, Menez-Rosal said that some 1,300 Fil-Ams had already taken their oath of allegiance at the consulate.

* * *

Daily oath-takings are held at the consulate on Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco and in the cities that Menez-Rosal visits in her nine-state jurisdiction where about half a million Filipinos live. The US Pinoys have eagerly welcomed dual citizenship, but the overseas voting registration did not fare as well, which is not surprising, as there were many kinks that have to be ironed out. From a target of about 400,000 US-based voters, only over 129,000 or about 32 percent had registered as of September last year.

One reason was the fear over a stipulation in the absentee voting law that permanent US immigrants have to execute an affidavit declaring that they will return to the Philippines and live there permanently within three years. Many feared it would prejudice their immigrant status. Moreover, they were discouraged by the requirement that they cast their votes at designated voting centers, instead of just mailing them.

* * *

The dual citizenship law is most welcomed by Fil-Ams for it now enables them to own as much property as their money can buy, unlike in the past when they were limited to only 5,000 sq m of urban land. This should boost the property sector, although locals can be expected to complain about rising real estate prices. But the biggest boon to the Fil-Ams is that they can now send home their aging or sickly parents to live in their own homes here and with adequate house help or hired relatives. As Menez-Rosal put it, the idea of confining their elderly to nursing homes has been anathema to most Fil-Americans as it goes against our culture.

* * *

For most senior citizens, returning to the motherland is attractive since the monthly pension they get in the US amounting to $1,000 can be converted to P55,000, an amount that is enough to live comfortably here. For others it's an opportunity to return and serve their people. An elderly couple, Dr. Ranulfo Lim and his wife Elsa, returned to Cebu City after their US retirement, and the doctor continues his practice, mostly pro-bono, in Balamban town. They have kept their condominium in Daly City for periodic visits to the United States to see their three children, who are all professionals. Another senior citizen who hadn't gone home to the Philippines in decades was happy to lend his poorer relatives small amounts to invest in a sand and gravel or tricycle business.

The Fil-Ams are grateful to Congress for passing the two measures. In fact a second award from the San Francisco community awaited Senate President Franklin Drilon over the holidays for his advocacy of the dual citizenship law, but he was unable to come. They also appreciate President Macapagal-Arroyo's certification of the twin bills as urgent.

Bad air in Palanan

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ONE would think that, being residents of Makati, which is one of the richest, if not the richest city in the country, the folks living on Arellano Avenue in Palanan would be considered among the healthiest, most privileged of citizens. But if the account of one Palanan resident is to be believed, the health status of his neighbors rivals that of residents in the poorest, most remote barangays.

The reason for the spate of diseases, mostly related to pulmonary difficulties, including asthma, is the existence and continued operation of a garage in the residential neighborhood from which operates trailer trucks and tractor heads which have been emitting deadly diesel fumes and soot for nearly two decades.

The situation in Palanan has been covered adequately by the media, especially the INQUIRER which has published three previous stories on the problem. Resident Manuel Bondad claims, though, that despite the publicity and a recent ruling by the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board, the garage continues to operate and endanger the health and lives of his neighbors. "The LTFRB by unanimous vote (last Nov. 23) revoked the franchise of all nine units of tractor heads. But for reasons known only to ESC Trucking Corp., the registered owner, three to four units are still being maintained in the garage…Having survived 18 years, despite opposition from the residents and anguish for similar number of years, the behemoths and monsters numbering nine units are expected to be back if we remain silent. Our sad experience is living proof!" Bondad writes.

Let the plight of the residents of Palanan, then, illustrate what can happen to a community when its members are unable to unite and give voice to common concerns, and the local (and even national) government chooses to ignore even their feeble protests.

* * *

IN MAY last year, a member of the Mojica family, who lives right next door to the garage and repair shop, wrote to Mayor Jejomar Binay of Makati:

"Seventeen years ago and until today, we are still waiting for your assistance on this perennial problem that continues to assail our community. The smoke belching and noise pollution caused by the buses and trucks parked on the lot adjacent to our house which is used for parking, repair and fabrication have been persistent threats to our health and safety.

"Last April 17, my sister's car that was outside our house was bumped by one of the trailer trucks. We are constantly harmed by the polluted air from the trucks and the paint and thinner sprays. In fact, my recent lung X-ray showed a pleural thickening in my right apex and, likewise, my other sisters and nieces suffer from respiratory ailments due to exposure to this pollution…"

Don Don Renato moved his family to Arellano two years ago from their residence on Calatagan Street, one block away. Today, his sons Cedric, 3, and Samuel, 10 months, are both asthmatic and need assistance to breathe. Cedric has recurring coughs, respiratory ailments and difficulty breathing, conditions which never bothered him when they still lived in their old apartment. Neither of the boys' parents has a history of asthma, and a cousin who lives in the same compound is also asthmatic.

Patrick and Pinky Belicena are a young couple whose apartment is at the rear of the garage and repair shop. They have long complained of foul odor and fumes wafting in through the kitchen. Now they are worried that their two young boys, John, two-and-a-half years old, and Patrice, a month old, will come down with the same ailments as those of their young neighbors.

Bondad's own family has not been spared. Andrea, a family member, was diagnosed as "asthma-prone" at age one, and today, at seven, she has been found to have developed full-blown asthma.

* * *

"WHAT of the other families we have not talked to? What of those who choose to keep quiet?" Bondad asks of his neighbors.

Bondad says the "permanent solution" to his neighborhood's blight would be the cancellation of the garage's business permit.

With other residents, he says, they have a pending request with the Makati Zoning Board of Appeals to revoke the garage's permit, citing a violation of a Makati City zoning ordinance, and the violation of a 1994 requirement that the "consent of immediate neighbors be secured prior to the issuance of a building/business permit."

"We have attempted in a petition dated April 2003 to have the business permit revoked, but such request was ignored and we had to resort to the circuitous route of elevating the issue to the LTFRB, when the permanent solution is in the hands of the local government," laments Bondad. "As the annual renewal of business permits in Makati City takes place January 2004, this time we are hopeful that the Makati authorities will treat the matter seriously and with great concern."

* * *

TO BOLSTER his case, Bondad cites a study conducted in the United States that found a "link between soot pollution and increases in respiratory symptoms."

"Children who suffer from asthma are especially sensitive to diesel soot," the article states. Children are more susceptible to air pollution than adults because their respiratory systems are still developing, and because they breathe in 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults. "Even for kids who don't have asthma, air pollution poses an ongoing threat to their developing lungs," the article says.

But even without the scientific references, the link between "bad air" and "bad lungs" would seem clear and evident. Except, that is, for local officials who can't seem to see the link between their neglect and indifference and the long-term survival of their constituents.

Execution

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

TODAY Execution Tuesday, Dec. 29, 1896

Today, the general order released by military headquarters reads as follows:

"Art. 1—At 7:00 in the morning of the 30th of this month, the convict, Jose Rizal Mercado y Alonso, condemned to die by firing squad, shall be executed at the field of Bagumbayan. The convict, who has been placed 'in chapel' (an expression referring to death row) since 7:00 this morning, was found guilty of the crimes of rebellion and illicit associations.

"Art. 2—The conduction of the condemned to the place of execution shall be verified one-half hour before leaving the royal fort of Santiago, under the custody of the same picket which has mounted the chapel guard, passing by the promenade of Maria Cristina, to turn him over to the chief of the square.

"Art. 3—Two companies from the expeditionary battalion of riflemen No. 7, one company from the battalion of riflemen No. 8, one from the line regiment No. 70, and one company from the battalion of volunteers, all of about 100 men each, accompanied by bands and music, shall be the units which will form the square.

"Art. 4—The chief of the square, commandant of the headquarters regiment of artillery, D. Manuel Somes Escalante, shall pick the firing squad from the riflemen of No. 7.

"Art. 5—The Lt. Col. Sergeant-Major of the garrison shall deploy the units to their respective places in the square, order their return to quarters after the execution, and see that the Guardia Civil Veterana take charge of the corpse until its burial.

"Art. 6—The commandant of the line regiment No. 72 shall be responsible for the military wagon to be ready at the gate of the royal fort of Santiago, at 6:30 in the morning, to convey the condemned to the place of execution, if necessary.

"Art. 7—The commandant of the expeditionary squadron of the cavalry No. 1 shall assign a mounted unit to act as escort for the military wagon, to be composed of one sergeant, one corporal and eight troopers.

"Art. 8—The chief of the section of the Guardia Civil Veterana shall station his men in the immediate vicinities of the royal fort of Santiago, along the roadways and at the field of execution, in order to prevent the multitudes from congregating as well as carriages and to maintain public order.

"This is the order of the day for general dissemination and compliance.—Gov. Gen. Zappino."

The Court Martial Today

This morning a court martial was convened, under the presidency of the Lt. Col of the Infantry, Sr. Moreno Esteller, to try the ongoing case for the crime of rebellion against the individuals Manuel Abella, his son Domingo, Florencio Lerma, Mariano Melgarejo, Macario Valentin, Cornelio Mercado, Tomas Prieto, Camilo Jacob and Mariano Ordenanza, and the native clergymen Inocencio Herrera, Severino Diaz and Gabriel Prieto, all seriously compromised in the conspiracy plotted in Camarines to rise up against the mother country.

The presiding judge, 1st Lt. Sr. Despujol, acting as secretary of the court, proceeded to read the information of the pertinent events received from a confidential informant of the civil governor of the province. It was to the effect that the pharmacist Tomas Prieto had received a quantity of arms, and during his detention had spontaneously declared, to his own prejudice, all that he knew of this widespread movement, a related branch of those of Cavite and Manila.

The individual Prieto, repentant of his participation in the crime, manifested that, in connivance with Victoriano Luciano, who was executed later in Cavite, he had made a trip by riverboat from Camarines to that province, and back, loaded with arms and munitions which they had unloaded along the coast and distributed to the other plotters.

In plotting this uprising, various meetings have been held, headed by the leader of the movement, Florencio Lerma and his assistants, Domingo Abella and Camilo Jacob. Their immediate aim was to strengthen their numbers with the help of the clerics and other important leaders in the town and strike the decisive blow on the 26th of September, which day passed peacefully in Camarines since the plot had been discovered.

This declaration and that of the others whose names appear in the citation were read. Several individuals appeared to be innocent and were released; the others who were left were charged with the responsibility for the crime—13 individuals, 12 of whose names appear in these proceedings.

In the process of investigation a search of the domiciles of the accused yielded several firearms, munitions and a machine for making cartridges. The persons involved in this case, from the beginning, were unfavorably appraised by the Spanish community in Nueva Caceres as well as the religious and government officials. Some of the accused during the interrogation gave contradictory statements while others continued to insist on their innocence.

(From Umberto G. Lammoglia's translation of El Comercio.)

A grandmother's love

YOUNG BLOOD

Dwight B. Ebojo

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IT was almost noon when I rushed to the passenger terminal to catch the trip back to my hometown, only a few kilometers away from Tagbilaran City. I was very exhausted and already feeling the rumbling of my belly since I came from a rigorous Civic Welfare Training Service (CWTS) session that lasted the whole morning. The sun over me, as I headed to the gateway of the station, made my sweat-drenched face look pale against the clear sky. I had to pass through noisy sidewalk peddlers before arriving at the bus section of the terminal.

Luckily I was able to get the last seat before the jeepney left. The jeepney was big but it was too small for all the commuters packed into it. Having been the last person to arrive, I had to sit on an "extension seat" located at the rear of the vehicle.

A young friend of mine, who worked as a fare collector for nothing seven times a week in exchange for living rent-free in a loft belonging to the jeep's owner, was standing in front of me, guiding the driver. Beside me was an old woman I had not seen before although I regularly shuttled between my home and the city for about 10 years.

She was in her 70s, I guessed. With her were two young boys, the younger one sitting on her lap and the other standing on the aisle. I knew both were her grandsons when the older one addressed her as "Lola" as he asked for some cookies the old woman had bought from a vendor. The older boy was about six years old and the younger one must have been two.

I was looking at the bright sky through the jeepney's transparent window glass when I overheard the younger boy telling his grandmother that he needed to relieve himself. The other boy seemed not to have heard his brother's plea since he was busy looking at the billboards in the distance. I suppose the other passengers also didn't notice since everyone was wiping tiny trickles of sweat from their bodies.

The city streets were busier than usual and we were in the middle of a heavy Saturday traffic. Not knowing what to do in that critical moment, the grandmother handed the boy a piece of cookie, perhaps hoping it would take his attention away from his discomfort. However, the child was not about to cooperate as his eyes showed. Had we not been caught in traffic, I would have asked the driver to stop the jeepney and let the boy relieve himself.

After a momentary silence, I heard the old woman's whisper to her grandson assurances that in a few minutes they would be home. It was then that she noticed that I was watching them. I realized that my curiosity was making her embarrassed so I averted my eyes and pretended that I was not aware of what was going on.

Discomfort was written on the little boy's face, and the torment was becoming unbearable. Perhaps thinking she had no other option, the old woman pulled the little boy closer to her and pulled off his shorts. She seemed to tremble at the prospect, but quickly overcame her aversion and told the boy to let go.

In a split second, a dark patch had formed on the woman's faded black blouse and then her skirt was soaked and clinging to her skin. I saw the yellowish liquid flowing through her arms and she wiped them with her hankie.

When the young boy was done, he heaved a sigh of relief and smiled, full of innocence.

Secretly I also felt some relief. And then it struck me that what the old lady did was a clear demonstration of love and care for his grandson. I never saw any hint of revulsion or dismay in her face.

Until now, I can still picture the look in her eyes and they spoke of an unconditional love and compassion. Life is made up of decisions, large and small and in between. And that time, the old lady made a great one.

This story reminds me of the greatest man ever to walk on Earth, Jesus Christ. He willingly took up the cross and gave up His life for the sake of our salvation. Like Jesus, the old woman had a big heart and the readiness to sacrifice.

Everyone has a story to tell. It might be about an experience that changed a person's life or leaves an indelible imprint in his heart. A good story can open new directions for living, or trigger a change, or introduce new possibilities. Some stories inspire us to share them with others. Others invite us to return to them again and again for inspiration.

Thomas Guthrie once wrote, "By awakening and gratifying the imagination, the truth makes a deeper impression in the memory. A story, like a float, keeps it from sinking; like a snail, fastens it in the mind; like the feathers of an arrow, makes it strike; and like a barb, makes it stick."

This little story was all of these things for me.

Dwight B. Ebojo, 17, is a BS Accountancy freshman at Holy Name University (formerly Divine Word College), Tagbilaran City, Bohol.

THEY SAID

Shut out

"Swiss banks don't accept money from the Marcoses now. For the past two years, they have refused money of criminal origin."

—Lawyer Sergio Salvioni on the bid of Switzerland to erase its image as haven for dirty money

Continuing struggle

"Even if 1,001 Saddam Husseins were arrested it would not weaken our struggle."

—Ali Ghufron, convicted for last year's Bali bombing that killed 202 people

Dangerous

"Amnesty is very dangerous; it should be very calibrated. You may give the wrong message to wrongdoers."

—Teresita Baltazar of Konsensyang Pilipino on the President's general amnesty plan

Affection

"This message means that John Paul II has a genuine affection for the Philippines and the Filipinos."

—Fr. James Reuter, on the Pope's urgent message of compassion to the Leyte landslide victims

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Justice, not deterrence

SOMETHING is amiss in the discussion on death penalty. The common reason to support its implementation is crime deterrence—an argument that is rather weak. Whether it really does deter or not is controversial. After all, there is no solid evidence to prove or disprove it. But definitely, it will stop the convicted criminal for death penalty will surely end his life.

The real issue instead is justice for the aggrieved party and punishment of the criminal after due process. That is, the victim deserves just redress for the wrong done to him and the murderer just punishment. This basic concept of justice is rooted in a moral universe, its origin being the Creator-Judge who says, "Thus you shall show no mercy: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deuteronomy 19:21). In legal parlance, this is called retributive justice.

But some say, Christ's teaching to love our enemies supersedes it. Not so. For the context here is personal revenge, not justice. That is, one is forbidden to take revenge on one's enemies. Instead we are bid to seek redress of grievances via the governing authorities or the courts of law. They are God's instruments to commend what is right and good and to punish the wrongdoers (Romans 13:1-5).

For this reason, our Constitution sanctions the death penalty for heinous crimes not as deterrence but primarily as retributive justice. Unless and until it is abolished, it must be implemented without fear or favor, whether we are personally for or against it. After all, we are made to believe that no one is above the law.

Therefore, should we not then let justice take its course regarding the death penalty?

—DAVID V. FELICIANO,
Adlas, Silang Cavite

Welcome article on Miriam

FOR an Ilonggo overseas Filipino worker it is the first time that I've read a very nice writeup on former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago. In an article written by Tina Santos and Juliet Javellana (PDI, 11/23/03, "I'm done with politics"), the writers focused on the gentle side of the former senator. When I read the article, I was touched not because Santiago is a distant relative of my father but because I can relate to what she's going through.

Our society is very cruel because we expected too much from A.R. We expected him to perform well since his mother is an achiever. A very high level of expectations resulted in a brutal death for A.R. He was too young to die.

The article is by far the best article I have read relating to Santiago. This is expected since she is not a political figure anymore. Politics ruined Santiago's image. Her detractors overlooked her credentials. No one can question her credibility and achievements while she was in the Senate.

I just hope to read more about the gentler side of the person in the news. It is quite disheartening to read all negative writeups about people. I am pretty sure that Joseph Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Panfilo Lacson, FPJ have a gentle side too that should be written about.

I hope you can provide me an e-mail address of the former senator so I can write my condolences to the family.

—IAN K. SIAOTONG,
Corporate Communications,
Zamil Industrial Investment Co.,
Dammam First Industrial City,
Saudi Arabia

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Crime, punishment and elections

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I THOUGHT I would check out what the average man and woman on the street was reading, so I bought one of the more popular tabloids to scan the news.

As expected, the coverage was pretty much about crime and cleavage. The front page had a headline screaming, "Ayoko!"... accompanied by a picture of a woman to explain the "*ayoko.*" Inside, they had the lurid details of the crime, involving a woman in Iloilo whose corpse had been found floating in a river. What people thought was a drowning incident turned out to be a murder and rape case. I will spare you the graphic details.

There were many other crime stories: a brawl during a cockfight in Quezon that led to the death of one of the protagonists; a 21-year-old woman in Pampanga left pregnant by a married man, and driven to murder her infant; a judge in Ilocos Norte assassinated in his home.

Then there was the story of a 17-year-old houseboy who had come to Manila from Samar to work for a "Doña Irene," doing odd jobs such as cleaning house and helping to sell sweepstakes to put himself through school. Apparently, Doña Irene had been an abusive employer, scolding the houseboy for every small mistake he made, including his use of "*po*" and "*opo.*" Tagalog was banned in her household and she insisted that he answer her, "Yes, Señora" or "No, Señora." One day, after he had come home from school, he fumbled on something his employer asked him to do. An enraged "Señora" kicked him and that was it. The houseboy claimed he couldn't remember what happened next, except that he had axed her to death.

Ho-hum. So, what else is new? Precisely, that was what I thought, too, but wait, there's a catch to all this: the tabloid I bought was Tiktik magazine, dated Oct. 28, 1961. I was flabbergasted to learn that the 1961 issue was Volume 25, suggesting that crime-and-cleavage reporting dates way back.

My point in featuring a 1961 issue of Tiktik is to dispel the myth of the good old days. There seems to have been enough of sordid crimes to sustain a 42-page magazine like Tiktik, which was published twice a month. The pictures were certainly much milder: the front page "*ayoko*" picture was not a photograph but an artist's rendition, but inside there were quite a few rather gross photographs of murder and rape victims.

That issue of Tiktik also allows us to compare the causes of crime, then and now. Tiktik's crime stories suggest how poverty, abusive employers, cultural stigma (as with the single mother who killed her infant) drove people into crime, a situation that's all too similar to what we still have today. The main difference is that in 1961, we don't see references to drugs, or pornography, unless of course Tiktik itself is to be blamed, as our anti-porn crusaders might claim today.

The front cover of Tiktik declares the magazine as "serving your loved ones in life." The magazine probably catered to people's voyeuristic instincts, while offering morality stories, with the message that crime doesn't pay. The details about the motives for the crime, such as the abusive employer, become part of this morality play.

The police and detectives were apparently more popular then, having almost celebrity status, with Tiktik featuring their photographs, sometimes together with the suspects they had arrested. The back cover of Tiktik invites people to make a career of crime-busting, with a full page ad for the Philippine College of Criminology and its sister institution, Manila Law College.

Inside Tiktik had a declaration of its circulation, required by the Bureau of Posts. They ran 56,000 copies of their latest issue, more than what some of our newspapers do today. A sampling of the ads tells us that its readers included some from the middle class: there were ads for construction supplies, TV and radio repairs and several medical clinics offering the latest in medical technology. A year's subscription to Tiktik, covering 26 issues, cost P7. That wasn't a small amount, when you consider that the poor houseboy from Samar learning to say "Yes Señora" was being paid P15 a month.

This particular issue of Tiktik was interesting because it talked about national elections, which were coming up in November. (I hadn't realized the extent of our borrowing from Mother America, all the way up to the election month!)

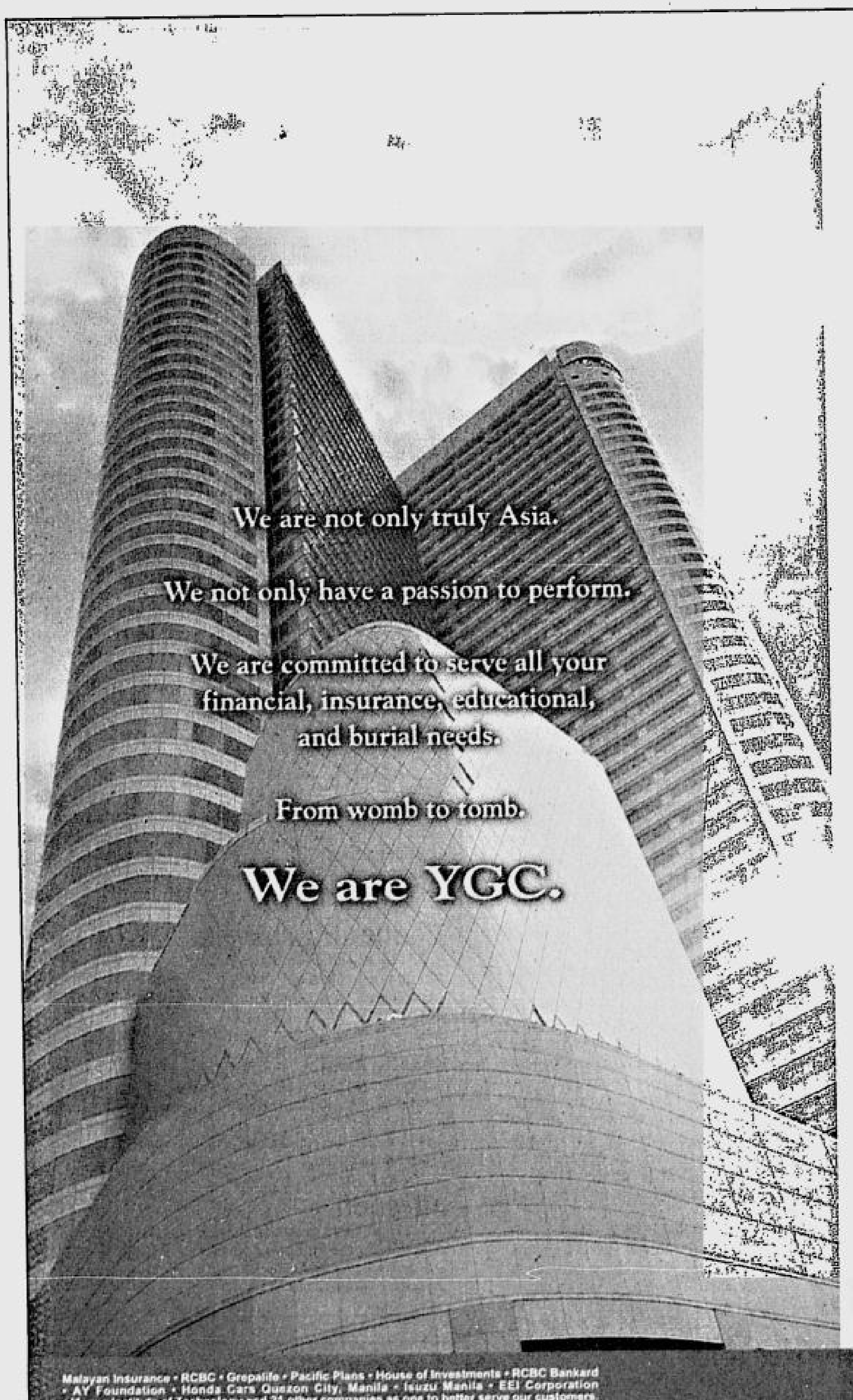
What did Tiktik have to say about the elections? There was an editorial cartoon showing a bomb labeled "Eleksyon," with a lit fuse. The editorial read "Kwidaw!" (Spanish-Tagalog word for "Be careful!"), warning of possible election violence in Ilocos, Pampanga, Cavite, Batangas, Bicol, the Visayas and Mindanao.

There were two other articles on the elections. One tackled the strengths and weaknesses of each of the presidential candidates. The incumbent, President Carlos Garcia, was running for reelection and was criticized for not having solved problems of unemployment, national debt, government waste and corruption, and too many taxes. Garcia's vice president, Diosdado Macapagal, was also running and the criticism against him was that he was arrogant and was campaigning mainly by blaming Garcia for all the country's woes.

The others running for president in 1961 were Senator Puyat, Senator Pelaez, Congressman Osmeña and a popular actor, Rogelio de la Rosa, who was already a senator.

Tiktik carried another article focusing on De la Rosa, by creating an imaginary conversation involving two women and a man, starting off with an Aling Teray offering to tell her friends about a dream she had. Mang Kadyo asks if the dream offered tips for *jueteng* bets (yes, *jueteng* was up and around in 1961). No, Aling Teray replied, she had dreamt of President Quezon shaking the hands of Rogelio de la Rosa, proof for her that the actor was meant to be president. There's a heated exchange of views between the two, and another neighbor, with Mang Kadyo grumbling that women didn't know anything about politics and that you needed more than good looks and a good heart to run the Philippines.

That year, Filipinos threw out Garcia and elected Macapagal president.



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NDF to start North Luzon broadcast on radio

BAGUIO CITY—Taking a cue from National Democratic Front spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal's radio broadcast over the Southern Tagalog side of the Sierra Madre, communist rebels in Cagayan Valley will also set up their own radio broadcast this year.

"Radyo Gil-ayab" will be inaugurated this month, according to the "Ang Bayan," the official paper of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Gil-ayab is an Iluko term for "blaze" similar to "Dangadang" or "fire" which is the official organ of the CPP for Far North Luzon.

Radyo Gil-ayab had a successful test broadcast over Cagayan Valley during last October's Peasant Week celebration, with NDF regional spokesperson Salvador del Pueblo at the helm.

This month, Radyo Gil-ayab will be broadcast every two months and disseminated on audiotape and compact disk format.

"Gil-ayab aims to clarify to the people the revolutionary movement's stand and analysis on burning issues ... transmit news on people's struggles and propagate revolutionary culture and art," the Ang Bayan said.

The paper said Northern Luzon rebels have been using radio since the 1970s to air their stand on issues like militarization, agrarian reform and regional autonomy.

Radyo Gil-ayab adapts the Iluko soap opera skits popular in the Cagayan Valley. These include "Toy Nagsurat a Kadasig Yo" (This Letter-writer Who is of Your Class), about the life and struggle of rebels and the masses that uses the program popularized by radio legend Tia Dely Magpayo. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Ambush victim emerges rival of Chavit in Ilocos Sur race

VIGAN CITY—Former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson is reclaiming his old seat in the province, saying he wants to continue his programs and face his detractors.

SINGSON

RAFANAN

Singson filed his certificate of candidacy (CoC) for governor on Dec. 30. Re-electionist Representatives Eric Singson of the first district and Salacnib Baterina of the second district also filed their CoCs on Tuesday and Monday.

"I filed my CoC early so that there will be no more turning back," Chavit Singson told the INQUIRER.

Singson and Baterina are running under the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, while Representative Singson, Chavit's cousin, is running under the Liberal Party.

Singson said he decided to run for governor to prove to his critics that the people of Ilocos Sur still support him.

"There is a small and noisy group in Ilocos Sur, backed and financed by Erap (his erstwhile friend ousted President Joseph Estrada) group, and this group never stops criticizing and maligning me. I will teach them a lesson—that you cannot just say anything against a person and get away with it," Singson said.

He was referring to the group of his former political ally, former Board Member Efren Rafanan, and lawyer Estelita Cordero, who are emerging as his opponents in the gubernatorial race.

Rafanan filed his CoC on Monday while Cordero, president of the Save Ilocos Sur Alliance, filed her CoC on Jan. 2.

But Rafanan is unfazed.

"I am leaving my fate to the people of Ilocos Sur. Issues had been raised and extensively discussed. Let them decide who (among us) is the better choice," Rafanan told the INQUIRER.

He said he was running under the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

Singson said incumbent Ilocos Sur Gov. Deogracias Victor Savellano would run for vice governor. Singson's son, Board Member Ronald Singson, will lead Lakas' candidates for board members.

Rafanan had been wounded in an ambush which his camp had blamed on Singson.

Rafanan is one of the leaders of the Save Ilocos Sur Alliance (Sisa) which had exposed alleged irregularities committed by Singson when he was still Ilocos Sur governor, including the diversion of tobacco taxes.

In Bataan, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chair Felicito Payumo said he would not run for governor of Bataan and would instead finish his term as administrator and chair of SBMA.

"I have decided to stay and finish the six-year full term as SBMA chair, which will be completed by next year. (I want to) focus on the implementation of two-flagship projects envisioned to spur economic growth in Central Luzon," Payumo said, referring to the $215-million Subic port modernization project and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Toll Road.

Payumo said he would support Bataan Vice Gov. Rogelio Roque's gubernatorial bid. Roque will face Bataan Rep. Enrique Garcia in the race.

In Isabela, residents are expecting a "battle of the titans" in the May elections.

Reports said Isabela Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. of the Nationalist People's Coalition and Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy of Lakas-CMD are expected to contest the top provincial post. Dy, NPC chair, filed his CoC last week. He is the eldest son of the late Isabela political patriarch Faustino Dy Sr., who served the province for 28 years. *Leoncio Balbin Jr. and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Nani Perez is GMA bet for Batangas gov; a Recto gives way

BATANGAS CITY—Former vice governor Ricky Recto, who has been doing the rounds of the province and announced his intention to run for governor, shocked the entire province when he showed up at the Commission on Elections yesterday with former Justice Secretary Hernando "Nani" Perez.

Recto even shocked the public when he showed two certificates of candidacy, one for governor, and the other for vice governor.

In front of the public, he tore the CoC for governor and filed his CoC for vice governor as Perez's running mate under the Lakas-CMD.

Perez is still being investigated by the Swiss government for money laundering and his suspicious $2-million account in Switzerland.

How the Recto family's most stubborn son decided to slide down, according to an INQUIRER source from the Recto camp, was the result of a deal between Lakas members that if President Macapagal-Arroyo wins as president and Perez wins as governor, the former justice secretary will be appointed to a Cabinet position.

That would make Perez leave his Batangas gubernatorial post and Recto would assume the position as governor.

But Recto denied this, saying he was after the unification of the province's leaders.

"I admit it was a very difficult decision, but I had to do it because it's the only way for the province to be united," Recto said, "But after more than a year of campaigning for gubernatorial post, I think campaigning for vice governor could be a walk in the park."

Recto is the elder brother of Sen. Ralph Recto, the husband of actress-turned-Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos.

Before leaving for the United States on Dec. 22, Santos told the INQUIRER that she would support her brother-in-law should he decide to run for governor.

"I think Mayor Vi and Ralph will help me more now that I am running as vice governor," Recto said.

He has been one of the province's most controversial politicians.

In October last year, he said President Macapagal-Arroyo was planning to use Mayor Vi as deodorant during the 2004 campaign.

But Recto denied having said that and said in another story that he was misunderstood.

On Dec. 25, Recto was again in another broadsheet, saying Perez wouldn't have any chance to return to politics, as he was as bad as "damaged goods," referring to the former justice secretary's controversial money laundering charges and the $2 million Swiss account that the Swiss government is still investigating. *Mci Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Gang man killed in riot

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A member of a neighborhood gang in Barangay Labangal here was killed during a riot on Sunday evening. Police said Sabri Maulana, 21, resident of Purok Maguindanao, and his group figured in a brawl with a rival gang around 10 p.m. in nearby Purok KPS. At the height of the melee, Maulana reportedly went home and came back with a grenade. The victim, police said, removed the grenade's safety pin and was about to hurl it at their rivals when a couple of gunshots rang. Maulana slumped, but before he fell, the grenade he held exploded. Senior Supt. Jorge Aquisap, city police director, told the INQUIRER that investigators recovered a .38 cal. bullet slug at the base of Maulana's throat. "It came out in our investigation that the grenade slipped out of the victim's hand when he (Maulana) was hit by a bullet," Aquisap said.

Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cop faces relief

BACOLOD CITY—A policeman in Cadiz City, Negros Oriental is facing investigation for allegedly firing his gun on New Year's Eve. Senior Supt. Vicente Ponteras, Negros Occidental police director, said PO3 Leonero Leonardo faces administrative charges for firing his service firearm in his home in Barangay Villamonte in this city in violation of the orders of Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane. Ponteras ordered an investigation. Leonardo, a member of the Cadiz City Police Station, was disarmed of his .45 cal. pistol and was brought to the Police Precinct 4 for investigation. He was turned over to Chief Insp. Edgardo Ordaniel, police chief of Cadiz City.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

New revenue formula stalls casino opening

BAGUIO CITY—Steep government demands stalled the opening of a casino at Camp John Hay here last week.

Poised for a low-profile launch on Jan. 1, the gaming firm Royal Highlands suspended its soft opening as negotiations between the firm and the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) remained "at a stand-off," a government source told the INQUIRER.

The source said Royal Highlands is wading through talks involving "a much larger P70 million" revenue cut for a limited five to 10 year contract, which BCDA is reportedly eyeing.

A city council resolution that welcomes the Baguio casino had fractured political alliances here, when seven councilors from the administration and opposition parties voted to bring back the casino.

Councilors who opposed the resolution passed in November last year said it ignored a 1995 resolution that prohibited the establishment of a casino operation inside Camp John Hay.

But Royal Highlands has yet to sign a contract with the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevCo), the leaseholder administering the former American rest and recreation area, despite the new resolution authorizing casino operations, said lawyer Gina Alvarez, CJHDevCo vice president for legal affairs, in an earlier interview.

"The timing of the talks is bad because Royal Highlands wants to re-compute its (return-on-investment) projections. (A recent ruling from the Supreme Court) voided all the tax exemptions it would have gotten from Camp John Hay so all its calculated revenues are way off," Alvarez said.

The October 2003 ruling addressed a nine-year old constitutional query on Proclamation 420, issued in 1994 by former President Fidel Ramos, which granted tax privileges to the Camp John Hay special economic zone.

The SC said only Congress has the authority to grant tax breaks to economic zones that are formed by BCDA. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

KNP questions voter figures

COTABATO CITY—A leader of Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) candidate for president Fernando Poe Jr. has questioned the sharp increase in the number of new voters here.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) reported that the number of new registrants reached 41,262.

The figure raised the 1998 voters' record of 77,792 by more than half.

"How could this avalanche of new voters reach 41,000? Where did these 18-year-old ... first timers come from," KNP convenor Jose Estaniel said.

Estaniel was not alone in raising doubts.

Former Comelec director for Central Mindanao Wilfrido Bueno said the increase was "highly improbable and irregular."

"That needs to be looked into...," Bueno said.

City Vice Mayor Japal Guiani Jr., who is running for reelection under the KNP banner, expressed fear the figure would be used by administration candidates to cheat.

"Most, if not all of the new registrants, were residents of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and North Cotabato...," Guiani said. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Pro-Gloria pols in Iloilo, Antique confused

By Ma. Diosa Labiste and Nestor Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The new administration coalition has triggered confusion and realignment among political forces in Iloilo and Antique province.

Some local politicians found themselves mending fences with their political enemies. Candidates of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and the Liberal Party in Antique both claimed to have the support of the administration.

The Lakas-CMD, the LP and the Nationalist People's Coalition formed a coalition called Koalisyon sa Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K4) Saturday.

As a result, Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas of LP was declared the official administration coalition candidate, which left his opponent Iloilo Rep. Oscar Garin (Lakas-CMD-first district) wondering why he was left out.

Garin's candidacy also hobbled when one of his avowed supporters, Iloilo Rep. Augusto Syjuco (second district, Lakas) announced yesterday that he would support Tupas in the aftermath of the coalition.

Tupas accepted Syjuco's support and declared him guest candidate of Ugyon, a regional party organized by Tupas and Senate President Franklin Drilon.

Syjuco's reelection bid would be unchallenged after Leganes Mayor Adolf Jaen withdrew from the congressional race to seek reelection as mayor.

Syjuco had criticized the Tupas administration over issues of corruption and lack of transparency.

GMA turns down Negros leaders' appeal for gov't to buy sugar

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo turned down the proposal of sugar leaders for government to buy sugar to bring down mill gate prices.

Instead, Ms Macapagal ordered Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo to act on a counter proposal for the Land Bank of the Philippines to raise its valuation on quedan financing and lower interest costs.

The President met with about 30 sugar leaders, including Sugar Regulatory Administrator James Ledesma, in Malacañang on Saturday to address concerns on the slide of sugar prices from P840 per 50-kilo bag at the start of the milling season to below P700 in some areas during the holidays.

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon, Sugar Board Director Rafael Golez, and sugar leaders had asked the President to direct the National Food Authority to buy sugar to prevent a crisis.

Ledesma said President Macapagal had taken some measures to arrest the slide in sugar prices but was not keen on the NFA sugar-buying proposal because of financial constraints.

The President pointed out that with the current budget, the NFA was faced with problems of not even being able to buy all the rice it needed to buy, he added.

She, however, acted on a counter proposal for the LBP to adopt more liberal terms for quedan financing, grant higher valuations for quedan, and to lower interests costs, Ledesma said.

The standard valuation for sugar quedans is 70 percent and the counter proposal is for it to be raised to 80 to 85 percent, he added.

The President also directed Lorenzo to discuss the proposal with LBP president Gary Teves, Ledesma said.

Quedans are receipts for raw sugar already stocked in warehouses. The producers sell the quedans to the traders, who will then show these at the warehouses so they can get the actual bags of raw sugar that they bought from the producers.

Sugar leaders also raised their opposition to the imposition of an advanced withholding tax on sugar, which, they said, was affecting prices, Ledesma said.

"The sugar producers want a removal or moratorium on the advance withholding tax until its implementing guidelines are clear," Ledesma said.

National Federation of Sugar Producers president Enrique Rojas said they were against the imposition of a 1 percent sales tax on sugar without clear guidelines and a 10 percent VAT.

The President called Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno, who was abroad, and directed him to meet with sugar leaders on Wednesday to address their concerns, Ledesma said.

"A hike to P730 per kg would be fantastic for the start of January," said Ledesma.

He said with the measures taken by the President, he was hoping sugar prices to rise when sugar-buying takes place on Thursday.

But Jimmy Golez, a member of the board of the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, reiterated the need for government to buy sugar to stop the slide in prices.

Golez said the losses would come up to P600 million with the drop in sugar prices by P150 and a conservative estimate of 200,000 metric tons of sugar sold.

"By the time the sugar prices go up there will be no more sugar to sell...," he said.

'Victorious, awesome, formidable' slate–JDV

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IT WAS A ticket that was "victorious; awesome, formidable," crowed House Speaker Jose de Venecia who co-chairs the ruling Lakas-CMD, even in the face of the failure to announce a complete senatorial slate and grumbling within the coalition over the inclusion of opposition politicians who had switched sides.(*See banner story on Page A1.*)

He said the chances were good that the 12th slot would go to former opposition Sen. Miriam Santiago, a staunch ally of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada.

Guingona, Alvarez

Heherson Alvarez, Lakas-CMD spokesperson, was set to file his certificate of candidacy last night as an "independent."

But sources said the camp of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. was "holding negotiations" with Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. and Alvarez for the two to join his senatorial slate.

Palace sources said Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, who withdrew from consideration late Sunday, agreed to be a "spare tire" in case Santiago declines the administration slot.

Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, campaign spokesperson for the President, said Santiago was just making her good-byes to Estrada who was reported to have asked her to be Sen. Panfilo Lacson's vice presidential running mate. (*Story on Page A1.*)

No deals

Defensor, who is Santiago's second-degree nephew, said no deals or concessions for Santiago or for opposition Senators John Osmeña and Rodolfo Biazon to switch sides.

But Defensor did not rule out a government appointment for Santiago's husband, former Interior Secretary Narcisco Santiago Jr., and brother, Benjamin Defensor, a retired Armed Forces chief.

"If and when Miriam becomes part of the team, helping [her] people, including Benjie who is on board [the administration] is a big possibility," Defensor said in a phone interview.

During a brief program at Plaza Roma, the President presented the members of her team, describing their qualities and platforms.

Senators' qualities

She said Sen. Robert Barbers, who was represented by his sons Rep. Ace Barbers and Dean Barbers, was a son of Mindanao, "Mr. Law and Order" and "author of one of the toughest drug laws in the world."

Biazon, she said, championed the cause of soldiers, housing and the sectors affected by globalization.

She said Pia Cayetano, daughter of the late Sen. Rene Cayetano, was a young professional with brains and heart.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon generated jobs in tourism despite the SARS scare, she said.

"Wow! Dick Gordon," she said, alluding to Gordon's "Wow! Philippines" tourism slogan.

A rebel who returned to the fold and a champion of Muslims was how he described ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin, chair of the Moro National Liberation Front.

Former basketball legend Sen. Robert Jaworski, represented by his son Dudut, was a "fighter for a sound mind in a sound body on and off the hard court."

Most applauded

She said Lapid, one of the most applauded, was the partner of the poor in times of need.

Former Sen. Orlando Mercado, known for his "Kapwa Ko, Mahal Ko" public service program, had been her partner for the welfare of workers, she said.

She praised Sen. John Osmeña for having authored the law that paved the way for cellular phones. "That is why the Philippines is the text capital of the world, thanks to John Osmeña," she said.

Ramon "Bong" Revilla, chair of the Videogram Regulatory Board, was dubbed the "terror of video piracy."

Former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas was "Mr. Palengke" and champion of consumers, she said.

She described De Castro as the "famous TV commentator" who has fought for the masses, "Mr. Public Service himself."

Believes in GMA

At a later press conference, De Castro said he decided to run because of the prodding of his supporters from years of being in the public eye as an ABS-CBN broadcaster. *With a report from Dona Pazzibugan*

GMA unveils K-4 coalition with show of force

From page A1

the Manila Cathedral where a three-hour prayer vigil and a Mass preceded the program and formal filing.

"I am married to our country," Ms Macapagal told the crowd in a rousing speech as she stood before a rostrum displaying the presidential seal. Behind her a giant wall showed her campaign slogan "*Subok na! Matatag pa!*" beside the name of the "K-4" coalition.

To the right of the wall was a smiling photo of "President Gloria" opposite that of her running mate "Kabayan Noli," De Castro's campaign monicker that recalls his popular television news program.

Pledge

The President pledged to crack down on corruption, drug abuse and terrorism while promoting economic recovery and wider government services.

She sought public support for her new K-4 coalition, which replaced the People Power Coalition, to bring about fundamental changes in the political system "so we can have a parliamentary and federal form of government."

She said her K-4 coalition stood for "resolve, clout, the experience to save the economy, to do the unprecedented changes that will make us more secure and to overcome the strong forces trying to divide us."

Stressing experience

The emphasis on experience was an apparent jab at her main rival, movie star Fernando Poe Jr., a high-school dropout with no record of public service.

She promised to provide health insurance coverage for all families, food on the table, housing and land security, more jobs, higher salaries, "clean water and clean government."

She said she had turned the economy around and stabilized the political situation during her two-and-a-half years as President.

Down payments

"These are down payments but we still need more installments. There are many things we need to do. Now, we are with people who will fight for change," she said.

"Honesty and experience for the future, long live K-4, long live the Filipino nation," she said.

Ms Macapagal then introduced De Castro and the 11 senatorial candidates to the audience that consisted of urban poor groups from Metro Manila, women's and transport groups and supporters from Central Luzon.

The final 11 were: Sen. Robert Barbers, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, lawyer Pia Cayetano, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Parouk Hussin, Sen. Robert Jaworski, Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, former Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado, Sen. John Osmeña, Videogram Regulatory Board chair Ramon "Bong" Revilla, and former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas.

Santiago was expected to announce her decision by the closing of the filing period.

"We will fill the other slot before midnight," said House Speaker Jose de Venecia, the president of the ruling Lakas-CMD.

Defection

He said if Santiago's defection fell through, the slot would go to any one of these three: Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, presidential adviser and Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez and Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando. At press time Fernando said he was withdrawing from the race as the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority needs him more.

While the President was supposed to be the star of the show, the loudest cheers went to the movie star candidates, Revilla and Lapid.

The President had to pause after mentioning Lapid to allow the applause to die down.

"My, it is evident that the governor of Pampanga is very popular," she quipped.

Brass band

Though streamers, banners and fiesta buntings filled the small plaza and a brass band was around to rouse the enthusiasm of supporters wearing the red, white, blue and yellow campaign colors, the K-4's coming-out party was not marked by the pandemonium that attended last week's filing by Poe and his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda.

Unlike the droves that mobbed Poe last week, yesterday's crowd was more reserved and emcees Housing Secretary Mike Defensor and Rep. Miguel Zubiri had to try hard to whip up a chant several times.

The crowd also did not attempt to take over the Comelec gates like fans of Poe did on Friday.

Singer Sarah Geronimo was onstage with Defensor and Zubiri.

During the program, Ms Macapagal's campaign symbols were introduced by Defensor, Zubiri and Conrado "Dodi" Limcaoco, presidential adviser on media and religious affairs

Her hand signal would be two-thumbs up, a variation of President Ramos' signature signal, and her colors were those of the flag—red, white, yellow and blue—because she is the incumbent President, they said.

'Ocho-ocho' prize goes up

A not-so-upbeat jingle was played yesterday but Zubiri said the President's youth group, "Team Gloria," was negotiating with Star Records for the right to use the popular song-and-dance hit "Ocho-Ocho" and the ditty "Bongga Ka, Day."

Zubiri said Star Records had jacked up the price of Ocho-Ocho from P500,000 to P1 million. They said they planned on going directly to ABS-CBN chair Gabby Lopez to get the price lowered. The song was written by an ABS-CBN talent.

The administration team's access to the formidable machinery of government was fairly evident in yesterday's event.

Lunch for 1,000

Police and the Presidential Security Group secured the cathedral and the surrounding streets before 3 a.m., and a long police cordon was planted on the path from the church to the Comelec where the President and her team later passed without incident.

A captain waiter at Tamayo's Restaurant where lunch was served said Malacañang paid for the luncheon for 1,000 at P385 per head.

A breakfast of arroz caldo, pan de sal with corned beef, siopao, hash browns and coffee was served during the vigil.

The whole event was broadcast live by the government-owned NBN 4.

The President, who led the three-hour prayer vigil that started at 4 a.m., was accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, their three children and two daughters-in-law.

De Castro late

De Castro arrived with his wife at 7.40 a.m. after the Mass had started and went to sit beside the President on the front pew.

De Venecia, his wife Gina, Ramos, several Cabinet secretaries and a few of the senatorial candidates also joined the President at the prayer vigil.

57th presidential bet

Ms Macapagal was the 57th presidential candidate and the 8th woman presidential aspirant to file her certificate of candidacy.

Some of the others who filed earlier were former overseas worker Salve Bush; housewives Luisa Dizon and Caliope Hara; businesswomen Luzminda Peñaranda, Beatriz Bellarosa and and Cristina Matias; and social and civic leader Fatima Jovita Pulgencio.

As of yesterday afternoon, there were already more than 60 candidates for president. *With a report from Martin Marfil*

Lacson runs alone as Miriam says no

From page A1

ning mate, just like (religious leader) Eddie Villanueva," he added.

But Banayo said Lacson was just as determined to run for president.

Only House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla of the opposition LDP counts himself as a Senate candidate on Lacson's ticket. Padilla has also been nominated by the KNP.

Brokered talks

Santiago confirmed reports that ousted President Joseph Estrada had tried to broker a team-up between her and Lacson.

"They want me to be Ping Lacson's running mate under a new opposition coalition," she disclosed the other night.

Santiago, who has bolted Poe's group, said she "promised President Estrada to at least think about his proposal overnight."

She said she could enter into an alliance with Lacson's group or the administration.

But she told the INQUIRER on Sunday that she was "more inclined to join GMA's team" as one of its 12 senatorial candidates.

But a phone call from Estrada a couple of hours later put Santiago in a fix.

In a fix

"I consider him the leader of the opposition. That is why, I think I have a moral obligation to grant every presumption in his favor. If things are equal I should take the position he has taken," she said, noting: "I'm just a follower, he's the leader."

In a phone interview on Sunday, Santiago said, "President Estrada called me up just before my scheduled meeting with (President Macapagal-Arroyo) today.

"(Estrada) said they were trying to form a new opposition coalition to be composed of the Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino, which is President Erap's party; my People's Reform Party and the Ping Lacson faction in the LDP."

"In the new coalition they're trying to form, it's going to be Ping Lacson for president and me for vice president," Santiago said.

But reached for comment, Estrada the other night denied he had been brokering the Lacson-Santiago tandem.

Miriam's heart

But it seemed clear as early as Sunday that Santiago did not have her heart set on running for the second highest post in the land.

"The vice presidency is a nothing job," Santiago told the INQUIRER then. Yesterday, for the second time in two days, she repeated her statements about the post.

She said she was "not interested in being vice president to anybody. It's a nothing job."

In a phone interview, she maintained she "already made my mark as a leading presidential candidate in 1992."

"I have until midnight (last night) to decide whether I would run for senator or vice president. I'll wait until the last minute before filing my certificate of candidacy. I can only run for one position, but right now I'm not inclined to run as vice president."

Asked what was wrong with the country's No. 2 post, she referred to the reported wide-ranging "political reform" the administration plans to institute in the next three years.

"After talking to President (Macapagal) Arroyo (on Sunday afternoon), I'm convinced she will ensure the transformation of government from presidential to parliamentary form," Santiago said.

That, she said, "would be a policy question for the president to decide."

Jobless after 3 years

"Can you imagine, the vice president will find himself or herself jobless just after three years," she also said.

Later, she also told other reporters: "I would definitely file my COC later today but I have until Jan. 15 to decide whether I would run under Ping Lacson's slate or the administration ticket."

Santiago said the divided opposition was like manna from heaven for the President. "*Parang grasya na ito ni President Macapagal-Arroyo. Parang hulog ng langit sa kaniya. Pati siya di makapaniwala sa suwerte niya* (This is grace, a gift from heaven. Even President Macapagal Arroyo can't believe her luck)."

Wed in a.m., Britney seeks annulment in p.m.

From page A1

day at a Las Vegas wedding chapel. The bride, wearing a baseball cap and torn jeans, was escorted down the aisle by a limousine driver, a source close to Spears told The Associated Press.

By that afternoon, the couple had arranged an annulment in the presence of several people, including a Las Vegas lawyer, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

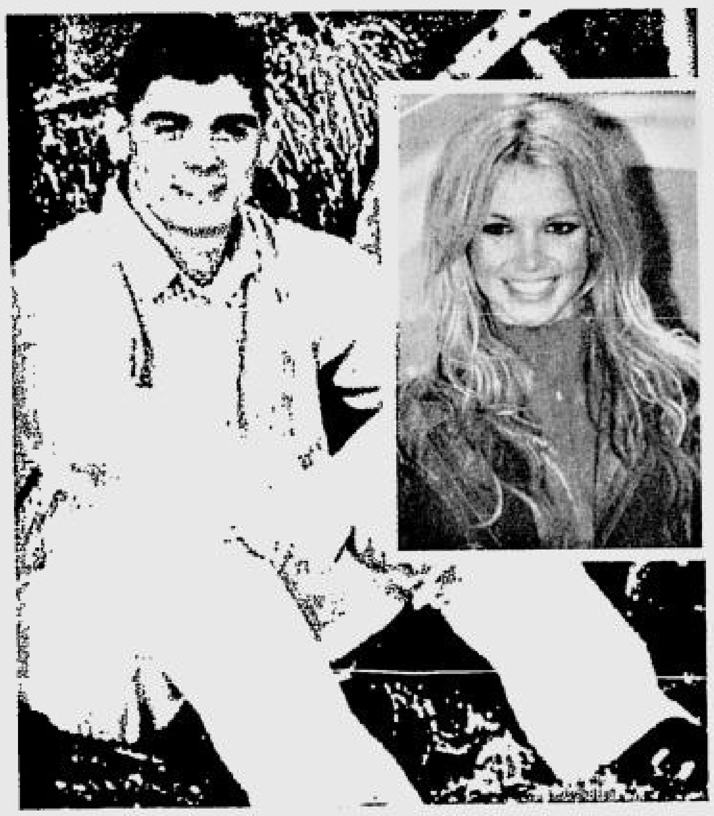
Spears and Alexander, of Kentwood, Louisiana, "took a joke too far by getting married," her record label, Jive Records, said in a statement released to "Entertainment Tonight."

"Ms Spears and Mr. Alexander have filed for an annulment which will become official on Monday," read the statement by Sonia Muckle, Jive's vice president of publicity.

Third chapel

After spending Friday night at a movie in the Palms' theater and in their hotel suite, Spears and Alexander showed up in the hotel's Ghostbar to ask for a driver.

After stopping at two other chapels that were closed, the couple found their way to the Little White Wedding Chapel. They were told they needed a marriage license, so at about 4 a.m. they drove to the courthouse, Spears' friend said.



JUST married—but only for a few hours—to pop star Britney Spears (inset), Jason Alexander, 22, is seen in this high school photo provided by his family. Spears and Alexander were childhood friends in Louisiana.

A marriage license was indeed filed in Clark County, Nevada, on Jan. 3, for Alexander and Spears. Signed by both, the document says they are both residents of Kentwood, Louisiana, and have never been married before.

"Nobody knew it was coming," said George Maloof Jr., a friend of Spears and the owner and operator of the Palms Casino Hotel.

Not drunk

Maloof denied rumors that Spears was drunk and had to be carried out of the Rain nightclub inside the Palms on New Year's Eve.

"I was with her the whole night," he said. "None of those reports were accurate. She was just having a good time."

Spears was staying at the Palms but was expected to leave Sunday. Employees at the chapel declined comment.

Alexander was back in his hometown Sunday, according to his grandfather, Robert Alexander.

"He'd been through a lot. We picked him up in New Orleans coming back and he didn't have much to say," the elder Alexander told "Entertainment Tonight."

"I wish them well," he said. "Whatever happens, happens."

He said Spears and Alexander had also spent Christmas Eve together.

Calls to Alexander's family home in Kentwood were answered by a machine. His grandmother said any details about the wedding would have to come from Jason or his father.

No hard feelings

"We know about the wedding and stuff. It's all over the news," Betty Alexander said.

There were apparently no hard feelings. Shortly after the annulment papers were signed, the couple on Saturday night had dinner at the N9NE Steakhouse at the Palms Casino and Hotel.

The only people who witnessed the wedding were the chapel's minister, a photographer and the bellman. The wedding ceremony was videotaped, but no video has so far been released.

The bride wore a baseball cap, jeans and a T-shirt for her first marriage. The groom was dressed casually for what was his first marriage as well.

The pop princess is a one-time children's television performer turned teen-aged sex symbol who most recently has posed scantily clad on magazine covers and kissed Madonna on national television while promoting her latest album.

'Toxic'

Spears' close friend said the pop diva was publicly seen kissing both Alexander and one of her female dancers while dancing to her new song "Toxic" at the hotel's Rain nightclub on Thursday night. "It made her kiss with Madonna look mild," the friend said.

The pop diva's most high-profile romance previously was with fellow pop idol Justin Timberlake, now enjoying a successful solo career after years with the boy band 'N Sync.

Spears shot to superstardom as a teenager with her debut album "...Baby One More Time." She released her latest, "In the Zone," in November, storming to No. 1 on the music charts with the aid of a publicity blitz. It was the singer's fourth consecutive No. 1 debut. *Reports by AP and Reuters*

Bus depot brings hope to Navotas

By Margaux Ortiz and Edson Tandoc Jr.

GARBAGE turned to gold.

This was how Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and Navotas officials described the newly completed bus terminal which will finally enable the implementation of the Organized Bus Route (OBR) on Edsa.

The 7,800-sq. m. terminal on C4 Road, Barangay Bagumbayan, which was inaugurated yesterday, used to be a garbage dump and a home to squatters.

Now, Mayor Toby Tiangco said, it would not only help solve Metro Manila's traffic problem but also help improve commerce in the town, which is highly dependent on the fishing industry.

The bus terminal extends the bus route to Navotas. Currently, buses stop in Malabon City.

He revealed that the local government had planned to turn the area into a commercial area but did not have the funds, so it offered the lot to the MMDA.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said that although it was only the second of eight endpoint terminals to be completed, the Navotas depot would allow them to test the effectiveness of the Edsa bus scheme.

The eight endpoint terminals include Baclaran, Navotas, Alabang, FTI, MIA, Marikina, Fairview-Novaliches, and Malanday-Valenzuela.

Fernando said the Navotas terminal costs a "minimal" P7.8 million for the construction of 58 parking slots, urinals, waiting sheds, loading and unloading areas, and electrical and lighting facilities.

"Once we remove all the squatters, we would be able to accommodate 400 buses," Fernando said.

He added that if the scheme proves to be effective, the MMDA would consider lifting the number coding for buses on Edsa.

MMDA traffic director Angelito Vergel de Dios said the terminal would be opened on Wednesday.

MAY 1 SEIGE PROMOTIONS

No rejoicing at WPD

By Leila B. Salaverria

THERE were no high-fives nor rejoicing at the Western Police District even after the National Police Commission (Napolcom) announced the promotion of over 1,400 Metro Manila policemen who defended Malacañang during the May 1, 2001, uprising of Estrada loyalists.

Moreover, members of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc. (MFBAI), whose members count most WPD lawmen, are skeptical whether they are included in the first batch of Malacañang defenders to be promoted.

SP02 Antonio Emmanuel, acting MFBAI president, said the group was taking a wait-and-see attitude regarding the announcement.

Although the promotions for the defense of Malacañang had long been awaited by WPD men, the group was not sure if all deserving WPD policemen would be promoted.

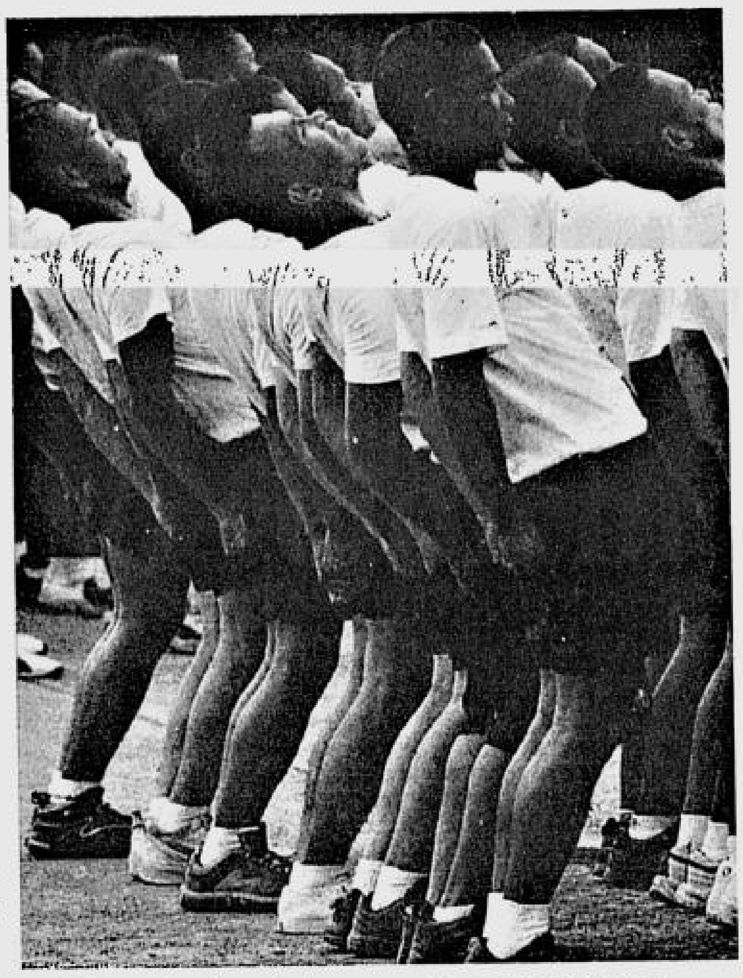
"The 1,425 promoted policemen come from all over Metro Manila. We are not yet sure how many of them come from the WPD," Emmanuel said.

According to him, most of the WPD's 3,000 members participated in the defense of the Palace during the May 1 siege. And since only 1,425 would be promoted, many of the WPD's men would not be among them.

Emmanuel added that the MFBAI would continue to appeal the Philippine National Police's decision not to award the meritorious promotion for the May 1 incident to policemen who had been regularly promoted during the same year.

The PNP has said that it will only give medals to those who would not be given meritorious promotions.

Emmanuel maintained that the PNP decision was not supported by any Napolcom policy and that meritorious promotions over regular ones were not disallowed by law.



POLICE recruits, who are being prepared for election duty in May, endure back-breaking training in Camp Crame. EDWIN BACASMAS

Driver shoots mayor's foe

By Luige del Puerto

A MUNICIPAL driver of Jala-Jala, Rizal, reportedly shot dead one of the leaders of the mayor's political rival on Sunday, the police said.

Suspect Derek Magararu, 32, allegedly gunned down Erwin Panguito, 24, during an altercation, but the police said it was fast turning into a political issue in the town.

Magararu drives for Mayor Jose de los Santos, said Rizal provincial Director Leocadio Santiago. He added that Panguito, of Sitio Llano, Barangay Tabingan, Jala-Jala, is a cousin of De los Santos' political opponent.

Santiago said they were verifying reports that Magararu used the mayor's gun against Panguito.

Initial investigation revealed that the driver and the mayor went to a dance party in Barangay Bayugo at about 1 a.m. Sunday.

While the mayor was talking to guests, Panguito and Magararu had an argument during which the shooting occurred.

The incident happened as the national police stepped up its enforcement of the election gun ban in Metro Manila to prevent poll-related violence.

National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO) Chief Ricardo de Leon said it was too early to identify potential hot spots in the metropolis.

He added that the NCRPO was recruiting 400 more policemen who would be ready for deployment in the elections.

Manila and Mexico have similar crime problem

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

I WATCHED BBC News Sunday night where the program, The Correspondents, featured Mexico City's peace and order situation.

I was shaking my head while watching the documentary not because I found Mexico City beyond redemption, but because it could have been Metro Manila that was being featured.

The two cities are like twin brothers or sisters. They have the same problems. Kidnapping for ransom is rampant. Streets and parks are not safe. There is graffiti everywhere. Drugs are sold openly in many areas. Prostituted women are in the streets, openly selling their bodies. And, most notably, the police are corrupt and inefficient.

Because of the seemingly insurmountable criminality problem, Mexico City hired the services of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani for $2 million. Giulani cleaned up New York City of thugs and drug dealers.

But still, the problem persists. The streets and parks are still not safe. Kidnappings continue. Graffiti is still everywhere. Drugs are still sold openly. Selling of flesh in the streets continues. The police are as corrupt and inefficient as before Giuliani was hired as crime consultant by the city.

Why can't the criminality problem in both metropolises—Manila and Mexico—be solved?

The answer is simple. Mexicans and Metro Manilans are happy-go-lucky peoples. They are indifferent to the plight of their neighbors; so long as they're not personally affected by crime, they don't care what goes on in the streets. The police in Mexico City and Metro Manila are corrupt because citizens bribe them when they get arrested for traffic and other violations. There are no takers where there are no bribers.

If the peoples of both cities don't change their ways, nobody—not even the greatest crime buster in the world—can solve the peace and order problem of Metro Manila and Mexico City.

* * *

New People's Army rebels killed an Army corporal and his son in Samar in violation of the Christmas truce.

The NPAs are no different from Moro rebels who are devoid of any sense of honor. A Moro would stab you in the back while giving you the "peace" sign.

Remember Army Brig. Gen. Teodulfo Bautista and his men who were killed by Moro rebels in Patikul, Sulu in the late 1970s? Bautista and his men were visiting the camp of the Moro rebels under a flag of truce.

A person who stabs or shoots his enemy in the back during a truce or ceasefire is a stinking coward.

Have the NPAs become stinking cowards?

Yes, guerrillas or rebels are waging an unconventional warfare against the government. Unconventional warfare doesn't follow rules of combat.

But does unconventional warfare include ambushing government soldiers when the white flag is up?

* * *

Speaking of Moro rebels, the people of Zamboanga City and province will miss Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat. Lobregat stood up to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) then under Nur Misuari, now in detention.

When no local official was courageous enough to criticize the intransigence of MNLF's Misuari, Lobregat was there. She was like a mother hen protecting its chicks from a hawk. Aside from Cesar Climaco, Lobregat is Zamboanga City's "fightingest" mayor. And to think that she was a woman.

Lobregat passed away last Friday. The Old Lady of Zamboanga City died of cardiac arrest and not of a bullet wound, unlike Climaco.

* * *

Zamboanga City is now the only Chavacano-speaking place in the whole country. Cavite used to be Chavacano-speaking, but the dialect is now only spoken by very old people.

Chavacano is pidgin Spanish. It doesn't follow Spanish conjugation and grammar. Chavacano is a mixture of Spanish and Visayan, in the case of Zamboanga City, and Spanish and Tagalog in the case of Cavite.

A few years ago, the Chavacano dialect was becoming extinct because of the influx of other non-Chavacanos, mostly Visayans, to Zamboanga City.

Lobregat revived the Chavacano dialect by propagating Chavacano songs and the old Zamboangueño culture.

The old woman made Zamboangueños proud of their dialect.

* * *

The administration of Medical City, a first-class private hospital, would do well to look into the complaint of Heidi Tateishi, whose 8-month-old daughter, Kotomi, was confined at the hospital recently.

Tateishi complains that one of the nurses, Cherielyn Clavel, mishandled the infant patient. When she protested, the nurse reportedly ignored her.

Worse, the infant was served rancid oatmeal by the hospital's dietary department.

Kotomi was no ordinary patient. The mother got the infant a suite in the hospital.

Ms Tateishi says that her complaint addressed to the hospital administration fell on deaf ears.

Change of heart

From page A16

Senate," Fernando said.

He also said his "consideration of resources and party affiliation and loyalty" were among the reasons behind his decision.

City information officer Carmelita Lorenzo said Fernando also shared the news to his supporters at the Shoe Hall in Marikina at around 1:30 p.m.

"First of all, there's no certainty (that I would win)... so your efforts would just come to naught," Lorenzo quoted Fernando as telling his supporters.

The scores of supporters that had gathered at the Marikina City Hall were supposed to go with Fernando to the Commission on Elections headquarters in Intramuros, Manila.

Up to the end, Fernando had hoped that his party would choose him as Ms Macapagal's running mate.

When the President chose Sen. Noli de Castro, Fernando said he was keeping his options open.

Then there came the reports that Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson was interested in taking him on as vice-president.

"Fernando said that by staying as MMDA chair, he could do more," Lorenzo said. "But I think in the end, he also does not want to run against his party (Lakas-CMD). However you look at it, running as an independent means that."

Fernando also revealed that he has accepted the President's offer to head the Lakas-CMD National Capital Region chapter.

Fernando will be replacing Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte as Lakas-CMD NCR chair.

Deadline beaters troop to Comelec

From page A16

mer mayor yesterday filed his bid, challenging the incumbent Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte.

Ismael Mathay Jr., who is running under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, served as Quezon City mayor for three terms.

The vice mayoral race in the city has turned into a "battle of stars" after Mathay picked singer Dingdong Avanzado as his running mate.

Avanzado will be up against actor and incumbent Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista.

Avanzado was accompanied by wife, actress Jessa Zaragosa, delighting the fans who lay in wait at the Quezon City Hall.

In Caloocan City, incumbent Mayor Rey Malonzo's wife, Gigi (Lakas), Rep. Enrico Echiverri (LDP/KNP), Rep. Edgar Erice (Liberal Party), former mayor Macario Assistio (Liping Kalookan) and Enrique Peras Jr. are all running for mayor.

Former basketball player Tito Varela will run for vice mayor. Comedian Dennis Padilla and actor JC Castro are gunning for seats in the Caloocan City Council.

The split in the LDP party between those for Fernando Poe Jr. (KNP) and for Panfilo Lacson, has trickled down to the local level.

Echiverri yesterday was not able to submit to Comelec officials his certificate right away because he was questioned for a few minutes.

He had written LDP and KNP as two of the parties that had nominated him.

In Valenzuela City, incumbent Mayor Bobbit Carlos' wife, Rita (Lakas), will go up against Rep. Sherwin Gatchalian (NPC) and Rep. Magtanggol Gunigundo (LDP) for the mayoral post.

Acting Malabon City mayor Jayjay Yambao (Lakas) is also seeking a full term. He is up against Canuto Oreta (LDP/NPC), brother-in-law of Sen. Tessie Oreta, and Rep. Ricky Sandoval's wife, Jeannie (Liberal Party).

In Navotas, only incumbent Mayor Toby Tiangco has filed his bid as of yesterday afternoon.

Actor Sonny Parsons will be running for mayor of Marikina City. He is up against incumbent Mayor Marides Lourdes Fernando. *Edson Tandoc Jr., Tina Santos, Tarra Quismundo and Luige del Puerto*

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CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
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1.5 HPWM	32,000.00
2.0 HPWM	39,500.00
2.5 HPWM	44,000.00
3.0 TRFM	55,500.00
3.0 TRCM	58,000.00

FEDDERS

CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
1.0 HPWM	₱ 29,500.00
1.5 HPWM	32,500.00
2.0 HPWM	40,000.00
2.5 HPWM	44,500.00

DAIKIN

CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
1.0 HPWM	₱ 30,000.00
1.5 HPWM	33,000.00
2.0 HPWM	40,500.00
2.5 HPWM	45,000.00

Carrier

CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
1.0 HPWM	₱ 29,500.00
1.5 HPWM	32,500.00
2.0 HPWM	40,000.00
2.5 HPWM	44,500.00
3.0 TRFM	55,500.00
3.0 TRCM	58,000.00

TOSHIBA

CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
1.0 HPWM	₱ 27,000.00
1.5 HPWM	31,500.00
2.0 HPWM	37,000.00
2.5 HPWM	42,500.00

National

CAPACITY	INSTALLED PRICE
1.0 HPWM	₱ 31,000.00
1.5 HPWM	34,000.00
2.0 HPWM	41,500.00
2.5 HPWM	46,000.00

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METRO

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

MEGALOTTO 6/45
14 16 20 26 27 40

Deadline beaters troop to Comelec

LOCAL politicians yesterday rushed to the Commission on Elections offices all over the metropolis to beat the deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy.

A number of the candidates are politicians' wives, running in place of their husbands, show biz personalities and basketball players.

In Manila, former Manila Mayor Gemiliano Lopez Jr. and incumbent Vice Mayor Danilo Lacuna yesterday filed their respective bids—an event Lacuna described as unceremonious and gimmick-free.

The candidates, both running under the united opposition party Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, will be up against incumbent Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr., and city council Minority Floor Leader Don Ramon Bagatsing.

In Quezon City, another for-

DEADLINE/ A15

BAYANI Fernando

Change of heart

BF no longer running for veep

By Margaux Ortiz and Luige del Puerto

BAYANI Fernando is not running.

Fernando yesterday declared that he will not pursue his vice presidential bid in the 2004 elections and will remain as head of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

"I'm sorry to disappoint those who have promised to support my candidacy, but I have to stay where I could be most effective," Fernando said in a press conference.

When asked to comment, Marikina Mayor Marides Lourdes Fernando said that her husband's decision did not come as a shock.

"It was his decision," she said.

The mayor added that Fernando would not be seeking any other elective office.

Fernando said that "up to the last minute," President Macapagal-Arroyo had tried to convince him to run for senator under the Lakas Christian-Muslim Democrats party.

"But I feel the people need me more at the MMDA than in the

CHANGE/ A15

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TUESDAY,
JANUARY 6, 2004

SPORTS

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: Vintage NBA - Andrew Toney: 8:30 a.m.; Willis Reed, 1 p.m.; Solar Sports - Take a look back at the careers of 'the Boston Strangler' and the Knicks' former captain.

Spurs vs Nuggets: 10:30 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports - Midwest division rivals and former ABA squads San Antonio and Denver engage in a shootout.

POOL: World Pool League 2003: 8:30 p.m.; ESPN - See Efren "Bata" Reyes in action against Hsia Hui Kai.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

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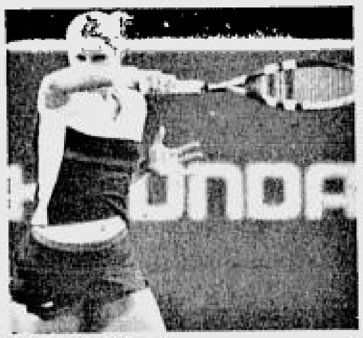
- Killer Kidd stuff knocks out Knicks /A19
- Montaña, Viva-FEU fight for survival /A18



- Clijsters powers Belgian sweep /A19

Limpot traded to Purefoods for Seigle

By June Navarro

JUN Limpot found a new team in Purefoods yesterday in a swap with Andy Seigle following a blockbuster trade involving three teams in the Philippine Basketball Association.

LIMPOT: To SLR initially

A reliable source said the 6-foot-6 Limpot was initially shipped by Barangay Ginebra to Sta. Lucia Realty in exchange for a second-round pick that the Realtors could exercise either on Draft day or next year.

But the Realtors, anticipating problem with the team's salary cap, swapped Limpot to the TJ Hotdogs, who gave up the 6-foot-9 Seigle in return.

But Seigle's odyssey didn't stop there. The Realtors traded Seigle to Barangay Ginebra with Sta. Lucia securing back its second-round draft rights.

The addition of Seigle is expected to add more ceiling to the frontline of the Gin Kings, who also boast of the 6-foot-6 Eric Menk and the 6-foot-7 Alex Crisano.

In the end, the Realtors failed to secure a player in the three-team trade but remained within their team salary cap.

With Kenneth Duremdes, Marlou Aquino and Dennis Espino being paid the maximum P500,000 a month, the Realtors could go over their salary cap with the inclusion of a top-earning player like Limpot or Seigle in the lineup.

Limpot was originally with Sta. Lucia before he was traded to Ginebra for Aquino.

The board has pegged the team salary cap this season at P32 million from P34 million last year.

Meanwhile, the PBA has threatened to haul Manila Bank to court should the bank fail to acknowledge the demand letter sent by the league.

Manila Bank had issued a Letter of Credit to NBN-4 as bank guarantee for the P200 million the government-run station offered to pay the PBA for the exclusive coverage of the games last season.

Manila Bank officials, however, canceled the LC and told the PBA that the bank guarantee was deficient due to the failure of NBN-4 to meet certain requirements.

But the PBA stressed that the LC was irrevocable and that Manila Bank should now pay the league P134 since NBN-4 has come up with only P66 million out of its P200-million commitment.

FILIPINO and Japanese jungolfers watch as LPGA campaigner Jennifer Rosales hits the ceremonial drive launching the RP-Japan Friendship tournament at the Midlands Golf Club in Tagaytay City. ROGER MARGALLO

TAGAYTAY DUEL

RP jungolfers show up Japanese

By Jong Arcano

RANGED against visitors who didn't know the course well enough, local entries dominated the first round, with Miko Alejandro breaking out of a slump to tie the red-hot Nonoy Negrido for the lead in boys' Class A yesterday in the Philippines-Japan Friendship Invitational golf tournament at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club course.

Alejandro eagled the sixth hole but still needed a birdie-par-birdie finish to salvage an even par 72, his best round in recent months.

Negrido, the newly crowned Fil-Am individual champion, played solidly with nines of 38-34.

Both were two shots clear of Ian Ray Intal, with Japanese bet Hirotsugu Kokubo tied for fourth with Cebu's Charles Hong and Justin Tambunting at 77.

With the swirling winds forcing the field to elevate their level of play, Remijin Camping came through with a one-over-par 73, also spiked by an eagle on the sixth, to pull away by eight shots over the fancied Jayvie Agojo in girls' Class A.

Only Kenshiro Ikegami was in the lead among the Japanese bets as he matched the pace-setting 78 of John Kier Abdon in boys' Class C. Ikegami had a two-shot lead going to the last hole but slipped with a double bogey.

Junro Mamaril also pulled off a big surprise in boys' Class B, joining Tonton Asistio for the top spot at 74. IG Gutierrez, Allan Guy and Adrian Woo were right behind them after posting 76s in the 36-hole tourney sponsored by Tagaytay Midlands, Comworks, Milkjoy, Bong Lopez Golf, IWSI, Nelson de Villa and La Jolla Golf.

Japan's Yuuta Tachikawa was seven shot

RP/A18

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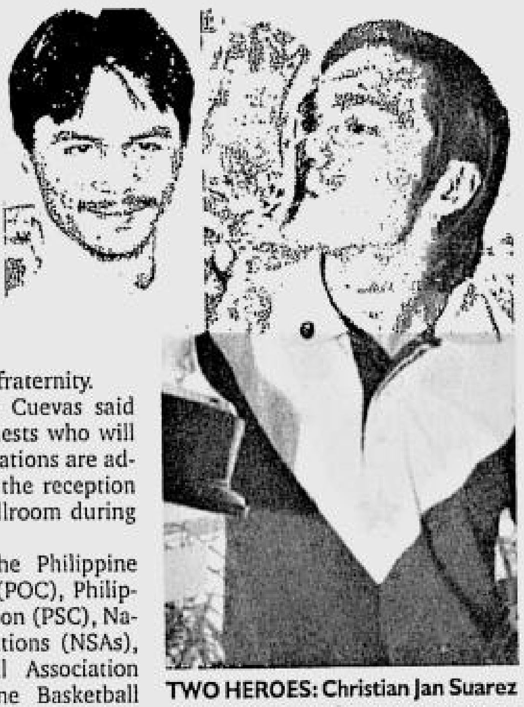
Cash rewards for 2 Athletes of the Year



TWO HEROES: Christian Jan Suarez and Manny Pacquiao. ROGER MARGALLO

IN one of the highlights of the Philippine Sportswriters Association Annual Awards Night, professional boxer Manny Pacquiao and bowler CJ Suarez will receive cash incentives from an American insurance company which supports sports.

PSA President Roberto Cuevas of the Manila Standard said John Hancock Insurance Company would give P50,000 each to Pacquiao and Suarez for winning the Athlete of the Year award bestowed annually by the country's oldest media organization.

"We are grateful that John Hancock is giving incentives to our Athlete of the Year awardees. It's a big honor to be a partner of this prestigious company in this worthy endeavor," said Cuevas yesterday.

The good news was relayed to Cuevas recently by John Casey, president and CEO of John Hancock Insurance Co. (Philippines), an American firm providing assistance to some local tournaments, including triathlon.

The PSA event is set this Friday night at the Manila Pavilion with no less than the First Couple and No. 1 supporter of Philippine sports, President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, expected to attend and share the evening with the honorees, friends of sports and the sportswriting fraternity.

At the same time, Cuevas said that honorees and guests who will not receive their invitations are advised to get them at the reception area of the grand ballroom during the awards night.

Top officials of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), National Sports Associations (NSAs), Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) and Philippine Basketball League (PBL) are invited, according to Cuevas.

In addition, PBA and PBL team owners, managers and coaches are also welcome to the affair, which will have as hosts amateur basketball standout Alex Compton and PBA courtside anchor Lala Roque.

The event is sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors and supported by San Miguel Corp., POC, PSC and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

The complete list of awardees:

Athletes of the Year—Manny Pacquiao and CJ Suarez PSA President's Award—Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecilia Yap

Antonio M. Siddayao Award—Bacolod girls softball team

Hall of Fame — Ben Arda and Celestino Tugot

Major awardees—James Yap, amateur basketball, Asi Taulava, pro basketball, Dorothy Delasin, women's golf; Wind Blown, horse of the year; Mark Paragua, chess; Arnel Quirimit, pro cycling; Patty Dilema, horse racing; Harry Tañamor, amateur boxing;

Citations — Steve Hontiveros, Air 21-FedEx, First Gentleman Foundation, Jojo Canare, Ronald Dableo, Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association, Philippine Bowling Congress, Jayvee Agojo, Philippine Racing Commission, Samsung, Glenn Aguilar, Far Eastern U men's basketball team, Kenneth San Andres, Dottie Ardina, Allenby Jiro Ramos, Miguel Tabuena, Ali Atienza, Cebuana Lhuillier and Rene Catalan.

Special citations: All SEA Games gold medalists. Posthumous awards —Peter Alegre, Percela Molina, Robert Cheng, Rene Fortaleza, Manolet Araneta, Pedro Adigue and Ramon Lim.

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2005 SEAG

POC awaits full gov't commitment

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WITH the election fever now raging, the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games continues to ache for attention.

That's the sentiment of Philippine Southeast Asian Games organizing committee (Philsoc) chief Celso Dayrit, who said they are still waiting for the full commitment of the government regarding the staging of the biennial event.

Dayrit, who is also the president of the Philippine Olympic Committee, convened the Philsoc yesterday and formed different committees for the 2005 Games, including the all-important games and rules committee.

POC spokesperson Gus Villanueva said that while there is still no commitment as to the extent of government support, the Philsoc has been mapping up plans to make sure the preparation won't be delayed.

Initially, he said, the Philsoc intends to hold a maximum of just 30 events for the 2005 SEAG calendar. In 2001, Kuala Lumpur had 34 sports, while Vietnam staged 32 last year.

Villanueva said the Philsoc has already agreed on the 20 "priority sports" which will then be presented to the members of the SEA Games Federation that will meet here on March 4-5.

In choosing the priority sports, according to Villanueva, the Philsoc will have to consider improving the country's chances of winning golds to help the national campaign for the overall title.

Though the Philsoc failed to name some of the sports likely to make the priority list, the country is deemed strong in bowling, billiards, dancesports and practical shooting.

The POC general assembly will approve the list of 20 priority sports when it convenes Jan. 28.

Montaña, Viva-FEU fight for survival

MONTAÑA attempts to keep its semifinal hopes alive when it takes on doormat ICTSI-La Salle today in the PBL Platinum Cup at the Pasig Sports Center even as early qualifier Welcoat squares off with embattled Viva-FEU today.

The Jewels, who are on an alarming four-game skid, need to win the 1:30 p.m. game to stay in the thick of the fight for the last qualifying slot to the next round.

Viva Mineral Water-FEU also fights for survival when it collides with early quarterfinalist Welcoat at 3:30 p.m.

The Paint Masters lead the tournament with an 8-2 record followed by Sunkist-UST and Blu Star, which are also in the quarterfinals with similar 7-4 records.

Fash Liquid Detergent (5-5) now has the inside track on the last berth following its 69-66 decision of Montaña recently, but the Jewels (4-6) promise to give it a go in their last two games.

Even if they beat the Archers today, Montaña still has to hurdle the Paint Masters in their last assignment.

At 3-7, the Water Force cannot afford another loss but the Paint Masters also need the win because the standings in the eliminations will be carried over in the semifinals.

Conference rules call for the top four teams after the double-round elimination to advance to the semifinals. Ties will be resolved by the quotient system.

Marc Anthony Reyes

STANDINGS	W	L
Welcoat	8	2
Sunkist-UST	7	4
Blu Star	7	4
Fash Liquid	5	5
Montaña	4	6
Viva-FEU	3	7
ICTSI-La Salle	2	8

GAMES TODAY
(Pasig Sports Center)
1:30 p.m.—Montaña vs ICTSI-La Salle
3:30 p.m.—Welcoat vs Viva-FEU

ROCKS OF IRAQ
They are the pride of the new Iraq—11 fighters plus their coach Tawfeq Mansour, interpreter Ahmed A. Rhoda and team manager Ian Van Meter—and they will be seeing action in the 22nd Asian Boxing Olympic Qualifying Tournament slated Jan. 10-18 at the Puerto Princesa Coliseum in Palawan. Not in photo is the pugs' American head coach, Maurice "Termite" Watkins. ROGER CARPIO

Lagman gains finals

SECOND seed Jacob Lagman downed Tim Polero, 6-3, 6-3, yesterday to reach the unisex 10-under finals of the 15th Andrada Cup Age-Group Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Lagman next faces Angelo Joseph Rivero, who scored a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Patricia Orteza in the other semifinal match.

In the boys' 12-under category, Kyle Cordero ousted No. 2 Joseph Baldonado, 6-4, 6-3, to forge a semifinal showdown with No. 3 Ernesto Pantua III, who blanked Norbert David, 6-0, 6-0.

Also advancing were No. 1 Akio Hari Ong Sy, who demolished Joshua Galang, 6-1, 6-0, and fourth seed Kim Ivor Saraza, a 6-3, 6-2 winner over Nicole Magaway.

In the girls' 14-under division, top seed Trudy Amoranto blasted Victoria Magaway, 6-0, 6-0, to advance to the semifinals against No. 3 Jessica Agra, a 6-0, 6-2 winner over Zhane Quitara.

Second seed Bambi Zoleta clobbered Martina Rivero, 6-1, 6-0, to arrange a semifinal duel with fourth seed Nikki Manalo, who beat Japanese Aoi Uchinaka, 7-5, 6-0.

Booking semis slots in girls' 12-under play were No. 1 Sarah Jane Lim, No. 3 Quitara, No. 4 Joan Therese Opulencia and Judy Em Botor.

In the boys' 14-under division, second seed Joshua Tan Ho downed Jose Lorenzo Opulencia, 6-2, 6-2, and Juan Carlo Pantua defeated Vincent Atienza, 6-3, 6-3 to reach the semifinals of this event sponsored by PSC and Dunlop balls.

'Gaga' Gabica stays invincible in Tanduay billiards challenge

BACK-TO-BACK Tokyo 9-Ball Open champion Antonio "Gaga" Gabica felt the pressure but rallied in the last five racks to turn back Sultan Kudarat native Godofredo "Boy" Ducanes, 5-3, yesterday in the "Search for Tanduay the No. 1 Billiards Player" at the Robinson's malls.

With the win, Gabica advanced to his eighth straight appearance next week as featured cue artist in the event conceptualized by Tanduay advertising manager Larry Li with support from Tanduay Distillers marketing manager Andres Co.

Gabica survived a jittery start as Ducanes, the 1998 Davao Billiards Cup champion more known as "Pusang Itim," quickly displayed his true form to take an early 2-1 lead in the match sponsored by Tanduay the No. 1 Rhum, Robinson's malls and Rommel's Billiards—the official table.

But Gabica regained his composure, scoring on Ducanes' break on the fourth rack to even the count at 2 all, and claimed the next two racks to erect a 4-2 margin.

He could have settled the issue early, but Gabica made a glaring mistake by missing the No. 9 ball.

Ducanes exploited the opportunity to threaten at 3-4. But luck wasn't on his side as he failed to drill in a ball on his break and Gabica wasted no time in cleaning up to seal the victory.

"*Marami siyang* smart moves *nung umpisa kaya umarangkada agad siya. Pero di ko na siya pinabayaan, humataw na rin ako,*" said Gabica.

"*Medyo sumablay din ako kaya medyo kinabahan din ako. Buti na lang sa akin pa rin pumanig ang suwerte,*" he added.

Later, Gabica's match against 2003 Mandaluyong Cup Billiards champion Emil de la Paz was halted at 2-2 due to time constraints.

De la Paz quickly surged to a 2-0 lead but Gabica bounced back to even the count just before organizers decided to resume the said match next week together with another budding challenger.

The "Search for Tanduay the No. 1 Billiards Player" is still accepting challengers from various regions.

Interested parties may inquire with the Corporate Billiards League secretariat at 0918-9219934.

RP jungolfers . . .

From page A17

adrift with an 81.

The Japanese arrived only Sunday night from Fukuoka and were not able to play a practice round. They vowed to do better in today's final 18 holes.

Debbie de Villa recovered from a poor start to score a 94 and snatch a two-stroke edge over Cyna Marie Rodriguez in girls' Class B.

In the special division for players 10 years and under, JR Gonzales and Allenby Jiro Ramos shot similar 83s to share a five-stroke lead in the boys' category while former junior world champ Dottie Ardina's 80 was good enough to put her ahead of Christina Potenciano (85) and Andie Unson (93).

Camping hit the turn at 34 but made two bogeys on the 14th and 15th, a couple of errors she had all the luxury to make as her rivals struggled under the tough conditions. Agojo finished with 40-41 and Matet Salivio made 40-42.

SPORTSWATCH

Spring Cooking Oil-SP cage team holds tryout

IN A bid to improve its showing in the upcoming Panasonic-NBC (National Basketball Conference) Invitational Cup this month, Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo will hold a two-day tryout tomorrow and Thursday at the Arellano University (Pasay) gym along Donada Street. Coach Ted Magno of the Spring San Pablo 7 Lakers will conduct the tryouts from 1-3 p.m. The 7 Lakers finished third in the last regional championship won by Compak/Shineway-Ozamiz after beating the Ilocos Sur Snipers in their knockout match. "Our boys did well in the last tournament, but we are looking to sign up additional reliable players because we want to win the title this time," said shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and San Pablo City Mayor Florante "Boy" Aquino, co-owners of the 7 Lakers.

Samsung jungolf tees off

THE SAMSUNG Philippine International Junior Championships, the region's biggest golfing event for the young ones, reels off today at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's East course. Eighty players from eight countries are competing for team and individual honors in the four-day event launched seven years ago by Edgardo "Boy" Cantada. The traditional opening ceremony yesterday officially kicked off this year's event, with guest speaker, veteran golf columnist Taby Tabaniag, extolling the importance of sportsmanship. Competition starts at 7 a.m. today simultaneously at the first and 10th tees. First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo has been invited to hit the ceremonial drive today. Aside from Samsung, the tournament's other backers are Cebu Pacific, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Pacsports, Morella Tours and Travel Inc., Herma Group of Companies, San Miguel Corporation, PLDT, Toyota Otis, Philippine Flour Mills, Gilberto Duavit, Takanobu Taira, Airlift Asia Inc., Raul Jorge, Sysu International, Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Triplex Tents and Golf Gallery.

B'vista leads Milo team

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD John Robin Buenavista downed Region 3 bet John Marco Lazaro in 32 moves of a Ruy Lopez game in the fifth and final round Sunday to rule the junior division in the selection tournament for members of the US-bound Milo Checkmate team at the J&F Divino Bldg. in Quirino District, Quezon City. Buenavista earned the first of two final berths disputed in the junior section. He joins the US-bound team along with seeded players 16-year-old Emmanuel Emperado of St. James College of Parañaque and 11-year-old Gabby Layugan of Ateneo. De los Santos, who finished second, grabbed the other finals slot, along with Under-10 champ Jan Nigel Galan and Christy Bernales. Brena Mae Membrere finished third and secured her ticket to the team. The last finals slot went to Kenneth Rovillos.

Roligon 4-cocker today

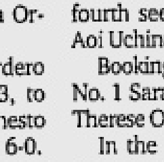
THE YEAR'S first big derby, "Eskrimador Super Gringo 4-Cock Derby," gets under way starting at 7 p.m. today at Roligon Mega Cockpit with more than 60 quality fights. Hosting the cockfest are Maj. Bobby Doromal, Greg Eligado and Roligon pit manager Roming Vergara. Seeing action today are prominent cockers and breeders from Rizal, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, Pampanga, Iloilo, Negros Occidental and Metro Manila. The "Nagkarlan AUT 4-Cock Derby" of Dr. A. Tuazon will follow on Thursday, with P300,000 at stake for an entry fee of P10,000. Also slated are the Tagapo Okidok 4-Cock on Jan. 13 (Joey Mendoza and Dr. Jovy); Classical 4-Cock Derby on Jan. 15 (Pol Garde); One-Cock Ulutan on Jan. 16 (Bebot Reyes, WPC and Abraham Bernales); Otso-Otso 4-Cock Derby on Jan. 22 (Rey Bagatsing), and Tonio 4-Cock Derby on Jan. 27 (Pat Herlihey, Mike Romulo and Tonio Group). For inquiries, call 833-2275 and 833-1638.

PCC derby lures 70 entries

AT LEAST 70 participants have confirmed to join the Pasay City Cockpit's special 4-cock derby on Jan. 16, promoters Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola said yesterday. For an entry fee of P6,600 the guaranteed prize is P500,000, regardless of the actual number of entries. Paliza and Badiola said it is their policy to guarantee the prize specified in the invitations. Submission of weights is on Jan. 15, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. For other details, call 843-1890, 843-1746 or 816-6750. The event will start at 10 a.m. Those who have also confirmed to join are Nono San Pablo, Dong Palileo, Evelyn Caparros, Danny Sarmiento, Frankie Tan, Tony Leyba, Manny Dayrit, Alma Pineda, Arnel Geronga, among others. Sponsors Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Mite Free.

Unbeatable foe

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

A READER wrote a columnist: "How many people have you helped in your lifetime? It seems the only things you can write about with any expertise are drunks, booze, whores and crooked politicians."

He replied: "Hah! You left out grave robbers, so the laugh's on you."

Listen further to him:

On teenagers—"The finest teenager I ever knew was Slats Grobnik, who devoted his formative years to useless activities . . . He knew that in a few short years he would have to go out and get a job and begin doing something useful. And, on his 40th birthday, he did. As Slat always said about work: 'If it's so good, how come they have to pay you to do it?'"

On happiness—"Show me somebody who is always smiling, always cheerful, always optimistic, and I will show you somebody who hasn't the faintest idea what the heck is really going on."

I know what's going on. Everybody wants to be happy, but almost everybody doesn't seem to know how to be happy.

Athletes want to be happy by winning medals. They are mistaken. Happiness isn't always the child of victory. Ask CJ Suarez, the present world bowling champion. Or Manny Pacquiao, the present "people's world featherweight champion."

They seem unhappy at the moment despite having captured world adulation. That's because they lack the skill to comprehend what happiness is.

How to be happy is chicken feed really. Peanuts. The easiest thing to do.

There's only one rule: Strive to be happy. How can you be happy if you don't strive to be happy?

Again, it starts with knowledge. Without knowledge, you can't proceed. Without knowledge, you can't succeed, will never prosper.

So, first know what sadness is. Knowing sadness is the key to knowing happiness. And vice versa.

It's like preparing for battle. Know your opponent first before you can start thinking of victory.

I'm sure CJ Suarez didn't go to Honduras not fully prepared to win. First, he had to know the opposition. Next, he had to know how well he could match up to his foes. Knowing both fully, CJ Suarez had been virtually guaranteed of victory.

Same thing with Pacquiao. He went to the Alamodome armed with the knowledge that he knew Marco Antonio Barrera literally from head to toe. Pacquiao, like CJ Suarez, knew that before knowing yourself fully, you first have to know your opponent fully. Pacquiao's knowledge of Barrera was the key to his 11th-round knockout of the Mexican legend.

It also holds true in politics.

Know your opponent and you will know who you are. Knowing your foe but not knowing yourself equals defeat. Knowing yourself but not knowing your foe equals defeat. But knowing your foe and likewise knowing yourself equals victory.

So, if President Gloria thinks FPJ is the Unbeatable Poe, so be it. What you think of your enemy is what determines your battle.

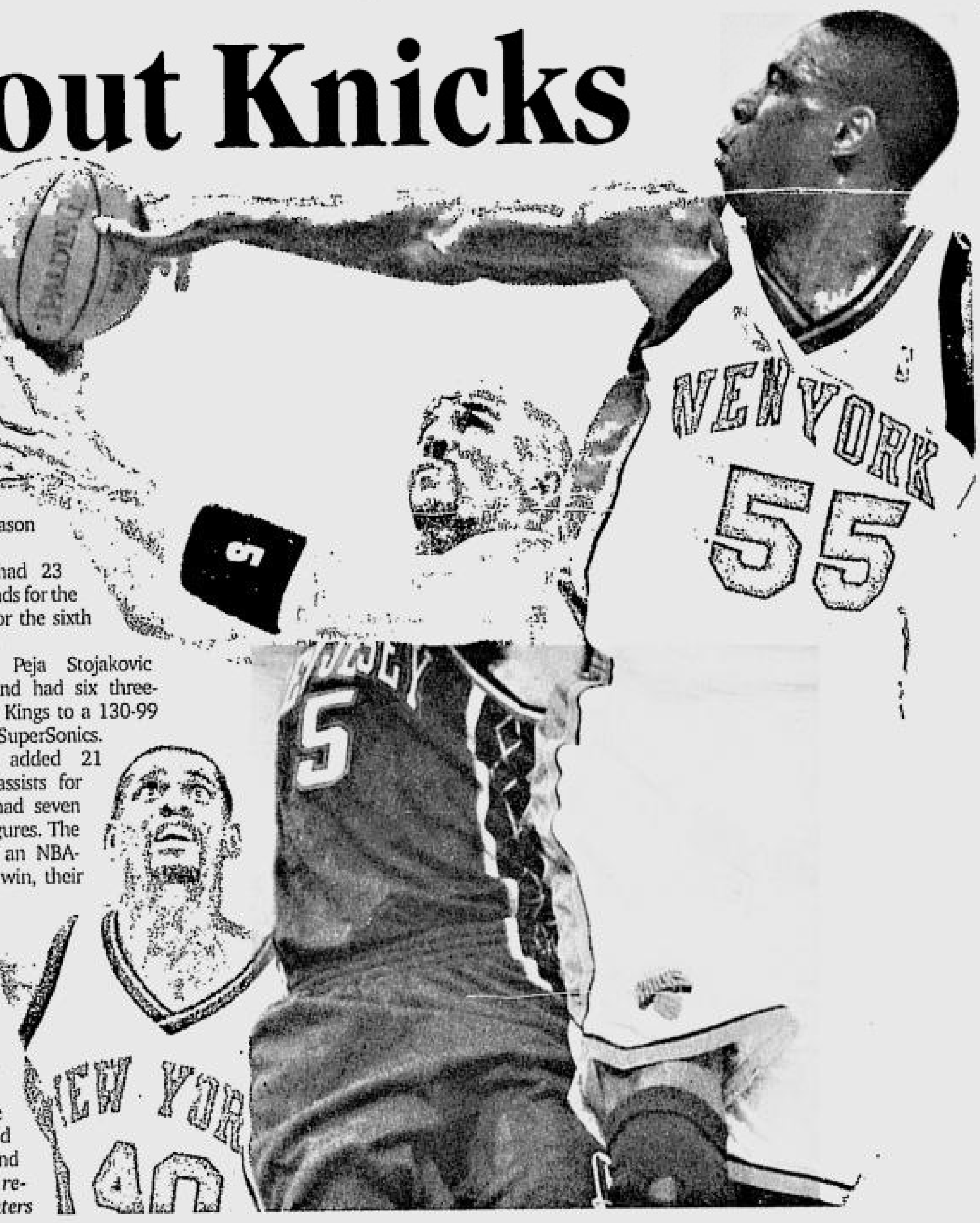
Now the question you've been all wanting to ask me: Did I beat yesterday's deadline of filing my certificate of candidacy?

No. But I have not reneged on my promise that I am running. I am running after voters to vote for the unbeatable foe. I'm sure you know who that is. If you don't, I can offer a clue. Let me begin by saying his favorite song is, "Inday ng Buhay Ko." And his favorite punching bag is Paquito . . . hey, wait a minute. Why am I talking when you don't seem to give a hoot, anyways? As one friend of mine loves to say when he is already drunk, by way of dismissing trivialities: What the hic?

Never mind.

Killer Kidd stuff knocks out Knicks

Nets guard posts double-double



DIKEMBE Mutombo of the New York Knicks smothers a drive by Jason Kidd of the Nets early in their game Sunday. REUTERS

NEW YORK—Jason Kidd scored 19 of his season-high 35 points in the fourth quarter, leading the New Jersey Nets to a 95-85 victory over the New York Knicks on Sunday.

Kidd also made 13 assists and grabbed eight rebounds for the Nets, who scored 37 points, including eight unanswered when the scores were tied at 70-70.

Kerry Kittles added 20 points and Richard Jefferson 15 as New Jersey won its third straight game. Kenyon Martin chipped in 13 points and eight rebounds for the Nets, who have won 12 of their last 15 games.

Keith Van Horn led the Knicks with 21 points and 11 rebounds, while Dikembe Mutombo tied a team-record with 10 blocked shots.

In Toronto, Vince Carter scored 23 points to lead the Toronto Raptors to an 83-73 win over the Phoenix Suns.

Jalen Rose scored 16 points, Donyell Marshall chipped in 15 points and 15 rebounds for the Raptors, who have won three of their last four games.

In Washington DC, Michael Redd scored 27 points, making 10-of-11 freethrows, and pulled down seven rebounds to lead Milwaukee to a 100-94 win over the Wizards.

Tim Thomas added 23 points while Desmond Mason added 18 points.

Kwame Brown had 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Wizards, who lost for the sixth time in seven games.

In Sacramento, Peja Stojakovic scored 24 points and had six three-pointers to lead the Kings to a 130-99 win over the Seattle SuperSonics.

Bobby Jackson added 21 points and seven assists for Sacramento, who had seven players in double-figures. The Kings improved to an NBA-best 23-8 with the win, their third straight.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 44 points but it still wasn't enough for the Lakers, who were upset by the Clippers, 101-98.

The Lakers were without the injured Shaquille O'Neal and Karl Malone *(See related story)*. *Reuters*

'Ironman' Malone on injured list for 1st time

MALONE

LOS ANGELES—For the first time in his Hall of Fame career, Los Angeles Lakers forward Karl Malone is going on the injured list.

Malone, who is second on the NBA's all-time scoring list, was placed on the injured list Sunday due to a sprained right MCL that already has sidelined him for four games.

The 40-year-old, who is averaging 14.0 points and 9.5 rebounds, suffered the injury against Phoenix on Dec. 21.

Los Angeles has lost three of four games without the two-time NBA MVP.

Malone spent his first 17 seasons with the Utah Jazz but signed with the Lakers as a free agent last summer.

He has scored 36,710 points in 1,458 career games, an average of 25.2 per contest.

To fill the roster spot, the Lakers activated 6-11 forward-center Jamal Sampson. *AFP*

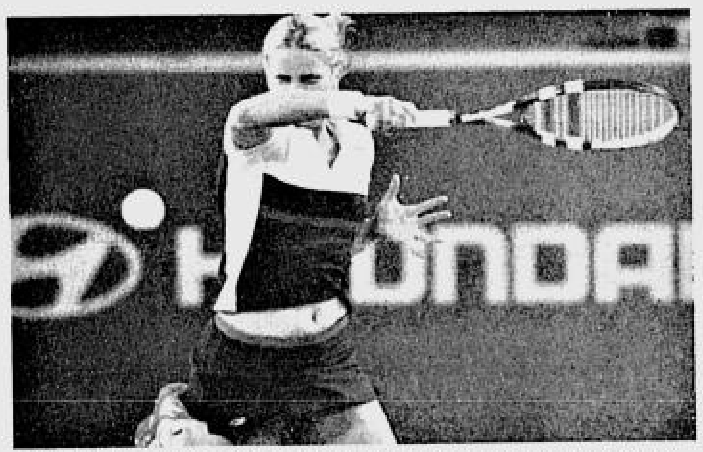
Iverson ready against Bucks

PHILADELPHIA—Allen Iverson will return to the Philadelphia 76ers' lineup Monday after missing 10 games with a bruised right knee.

"It's not 100 percent, but I think it's well enough for me to play," Iverson said.

The NBA's leading scorer practiced with the Sixers on Sunday for the first time.

Iverson's condition will be monitored at the end of every quarter against Milwaukee. *AP*



CLIJSTERS smashes a forehand return during her doubles win with compatriot Xavier Malisse over their Slovak Republic rivals. AFP

Clijsters powers Belgian sweep

PERTH, Australia—Kim Clijsters and Xavier Malisse won their singles matches and combined for victory in the mixed doubles to give Belgium a 3-0 win Monday over Slovakia at the Hopman Cup.

Clijsters beat Daniela Hantuchova 6-1, 6-2 in 40 minutes, the fifth straight time Clijsters has beaten Hantuchova. Hantuchova made 34 unforced errors while Clijsters had 10.

Malisse beat Karol Kucera 6-2, 1-6, 6-1. After Kucera dominated the second set to level the match, Malisse broke Kucera's serve to open the deciding set and give Belgium the win.

Malisse and Clijsters beat Kucera and Hantuchova 6-2, 6-4 in the final mixed doubles match.

Clijsters said she will reduce her doubles schedule this season as she goes after an elusive Grand Slam singles title.

Clijsters has failed to win a Grand Slam despite making three finals — the French Open in 2001 and 2003 and last year's US Open.

"I am going to play a lot less doubles this year," she said after beating Hantuchova. "At a few of the Grand Slams it made me really tired at the end of two weeks."

Clijsters is an accomplished doubles player, winning 11 titles, including two Grand Slams.

She made the last four at every Grand Slam tournament last year but was beaten in the French and US Open finals by compatriot and world No. 1 Justine Henin-Hardenne.

Russia takes on France in a match Monday night in the eight-team tournament.

World No. 4 Amelie Mauresmo of France plays Anastasia Myskina of Russia while former US Open champ Marat Safin meets Fabrice Santoro.

The defending champion Americans, featuring James Blake and Lindsay Davenport, play the Czech Republic on Tuesday at the indoor Burswood Dome.

The top teams in two round-robin groups play in the final on Saturday. *AP*

Ex-champ slashed in the face

SYDNEY, Australia—Former triple world boxing champion Jeff Fenech underwent plastic surgery Monday after being attacked and slashed in the face during an altercation with four men Sunday.

The 39-year-old Fenech was standing on the sidewalk in the southern Sydney suburb of Brighton-Le Sands after dining with his family when a car pulled up, police said. He began speaking to four men inside the car, who jumped out and attacked him.

"I saw a guy with a bottle that he just cracked me with on the side of my face," Fenech told Channel Nine television. "A part of my face is still just hanging off. It's quite severe."

Fenech was placed under a general anesthetic for the one-hour operation on Monday, an official at Sydney's Prince of Wales hospital said.

Fenech was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2002. He won the International Boxing Federation bantamweight title in 1985, followed by the World Boxing Council (WBC) junior featherweight crown in 1987 and the WBC featherweight title in 1988.

He retired in 1996 with a 28-3-1 record with 21 knockouts. Fenech now manages Australian boxer Danny Green, who faces Markus Beyer of Germany on Feb. 28 in a WBC super middleweight title fight.

Fenech said he did not provoke the attack.

"I was just sitting down, I did nothing to them," he said. "All my boxing career I've remained pretty unmarked and now I'm going to have a nasty scar on my face."

Police are searching for the men involved in the incident. No charges have been laid. *AP*

A banner year for Philippine sports–Buhain

By Arsenic A. Lacson

A SOUTHEAST Asian Games campaign that did the Filipinos proud capped a banner year for the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).

THE PRESIDENT and the First Gentleman savor the moment with the medalists in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games. VAL HANDUMON

BUHAIN: Team effort

Despite the odds, Eric R. Buhain, at 33 the youngest to chair the government sports agency, proved his detractors wrong, although he refused to claim sole credit for the goals the PSC achieved.

"It's always been a team effort," said Buhain. "The PSC could not have done it alone. At the end of the competition, even though the athlete doesn't get to stand on the podium to receive his medal, the Filipino athlete remained the winner in 2003."

Buhain was the first to boldly predict the Philippines would win more than 40 gold medals and finish fourth overall in the 22nd SEAG.

Backed by an intensive 14-month monitoring scheme, the PSC chief said the national athletes would deliver a strong performance in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh to meet the country's modest target in the biennial games.

When the smoke of the SEAG battle cleared, the Philippines had 48 gold medals to beat Malaysia for fourth by four victories. The Filipinos also picked up 54 silver medals and 75 bronzes.

Host Vietnam dominated the SEAG like no other with old powerhouses Thailand and Indonesia ending up like second-class teams.

But Buhain stressed the Philippines competed with pride and honor in Vietnam.

"World class," was how President Macapagal-Arroyo described the Filipino athletes when she received them barely a week after coming home.

"She [President Macapagal] was always behind the Filipino athlete. She is the No. 1 fan, the No. 1 motivator and the No. 1 supporter," said Buhain of the crucial role the Chief Executive played in the SEAG campaign.

Also a big help was First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, who raised additional funds through his First Gentleman Foundation's Medalyang Ginto, May Laban Tayo! Project.

Some P300 million or 80 percent of the PSC's National Sports Development Fund or NSDF was given to various national sports associations for the training, exposure, equipment, and preparation of athletes for the SEAG, including the monthly allowances of athletes and coaches, food subsidy, billeting, medical requirements, repair of training venues, and other basic necessities.

The 85 potential gold medalists from 17 sports also received most of the P22 million raised by the First Gentleman Foundation through a pledging session with the private sector in Malacañang.

Another P100 million was approved by Malacañang for the actual RP participation in the Vietnam joust.

Government, likewise, fulfilled its promise of releasing cash incentives amounting close to P13 million for the SEAG heroes before Christmas.

The PSC also acknowledged the support of the private sector, led by San Miguel Corp, ICTSI, Aboitiz Group, Ayala Group, PLDT, Centrum, Samsung, Air Philippines, Philtranco, and STI, in the full development of athletes and sports, in general.

The financial boost from the corporate sponsors was a shot in the arm for the PSC since the NSDF, which is basically remittances from the Pagcor, is primarily used to fund elite sports, while the Congress-approved General Appropriations Act or GAA fund is used for national grassroots sports development programs.

Except for the Luzon and Visayas Games and the Philippine National Championships that were scrapped basically because of funding, all other PSC programs and projects for the year went off the ground as expected.

Despite apprehensions over security, the thrice-postponed 2003 Palarong Pambansa games in Tubod, Lanao del Norte went on smoothly several days after the successful staging of the third Mindanao Games in Mati, Davao Oriental.

Puerto Princesa in Palawan also stretched its generosity in hosting sports events when it staged the Philippine National Youth Games—Batang Pinoy and the revival of the BIMP-EAGA Friendship Games.

Having weathered several controversies like the lifestyle check on Buhain and six of his close aides and the PSC importation of race horses, the PSC now turns its sight on 2004 and eventually 2005 when the country plays host to the SEAG for the third time.

"We have achieved goals and did our jobs in as much as 2003 is concerned. But we have to look forward to 2005 and to do that, we have to start work earnestly in 2004," said Buhain, who was also rumored to be on his way out several weeks before the SEAG.

Becoming No. 1 in 2005, Buhain said, has been his wish all year.

"But we must all unite for that," he said. "We hope the Philippine Olympic Committee and the NSAs could help us and throw their full support behind the government's earnest preparations for the 2005 Sea Games, as well as the implementation of a national mass-based sports development program for the country's youth."

Saying the dream of becoming a champion starts with one small step, Buhain said the PSC would remain behind the youth, whose development he wants to pursue through the holding of the Palaro, Batang Pinoy, Luzon-Vizayas-Mindanao Games and Philippine National Championships.

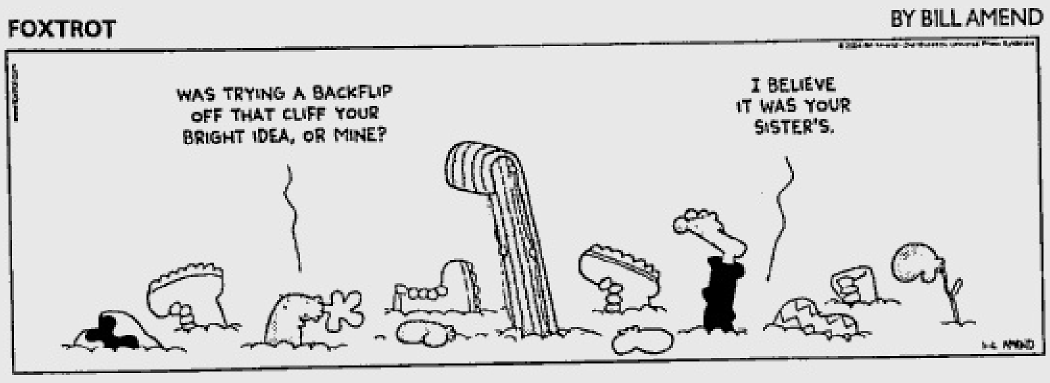
"These games will be their vehicle toward the fulfillment of their dreams—our country's dreams," Buhain said.

(Arsenic A. Lacson is head of media affairs at the Philippine Sports Commission)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
ComicRelief
e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2004

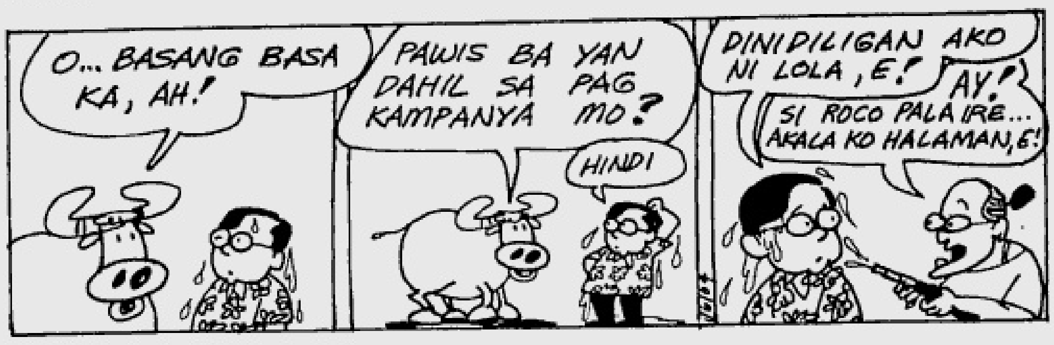
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WAS TRYING A BACKFLIP OFF THAT CLIFF YOUR BRIGHT IDEA, OR MINE?
I BELIEVE IT WAS YOUR SISTER'S.

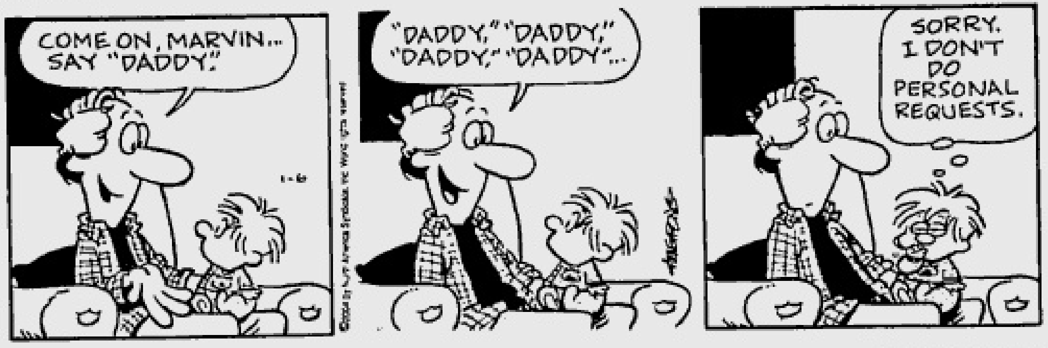
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... BASANG BASA KA, AH!
PAWIS BA YAN DAHIL SA PAG KAMPANYA MO?
HINDI
DINIDILIGAN AKO NI LOLA, E!
AY! SI ROCO PALA IRE... AKALA KO HALAMAN, E!

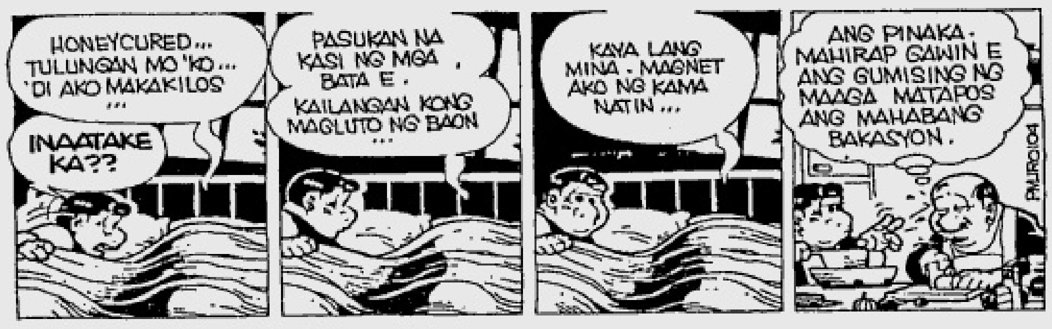
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


COME ON, MARVIN... SAY "DADDY."
"DADDY," "DADDY," "DADDY," "DADDY"...
SORRY. I DON'T DO PERSONAL REQUESTS.

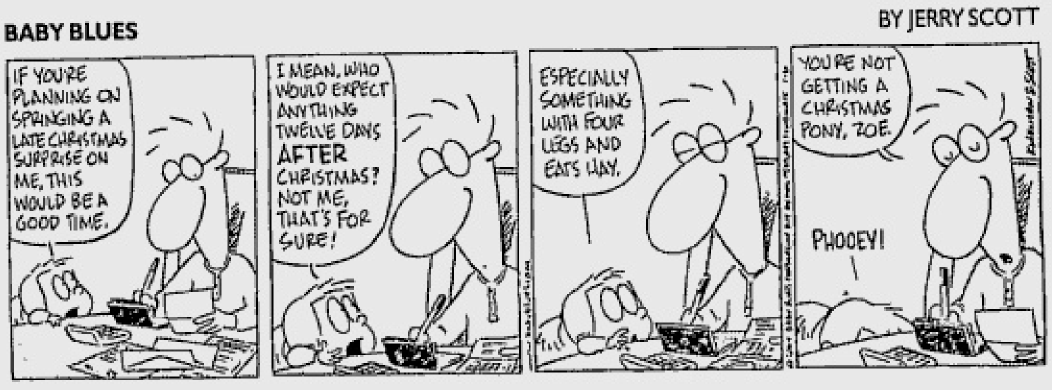
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


HONEYCURED... TULUNGAN MO 'KO... 'DI AKO MAKAKILOS ...
INAATAKE KA??
PASUKAN NA KASI NG MGA BATA E. KAILANGAN KONG MAGLUTO NG BAON ...
KAYA LANG MINA - MAGNET AKO NG KAMA NATIN ...
ANG PINAKA-MAHIRAP GAWIN E ANG GUMISING NG MAAGA MATAPOS ANG MAHABANG BAKASYON.

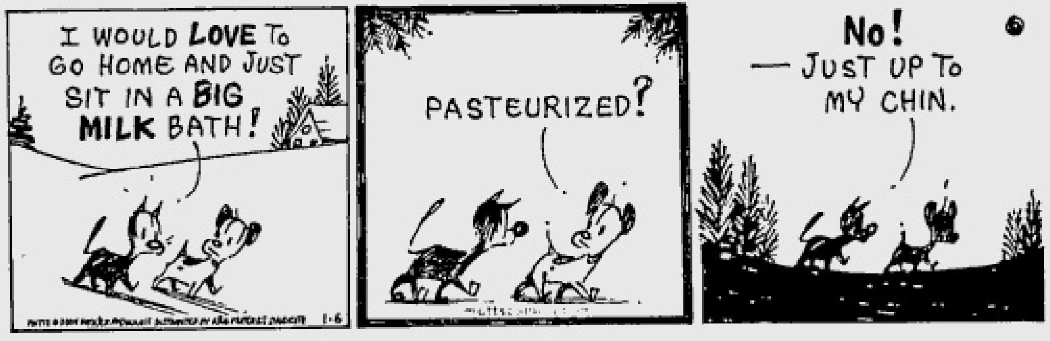
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


IF YOU'RE PLANNING ON SPRINGING A LATE CHRISTMAS SURPRISE ON ME, THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME.
I MEAN, WHO WOULD EXPECT ANYTHING TWELVE DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS? NOT ME, THAT'S FOR SURE!
ESPECIALLY SOMETHING WITH FOUR LEGS AND EATS HAY.
YOU'RE NOT GETTING A CHRISTMAS PONY, ZOE.
PHOOEY!

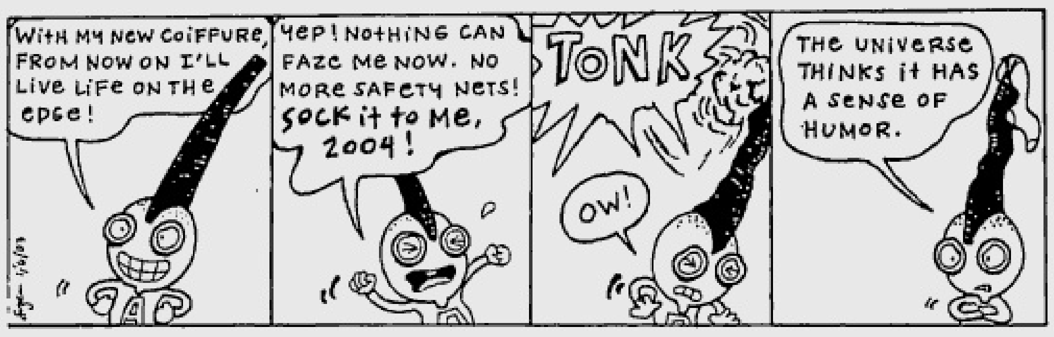
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I WOULD LOVE TO GO HOME AND JUST SIT IN A BIG MILK BATH!
PASTEURIZED?
No! — JUST UP TO MY CHIN.

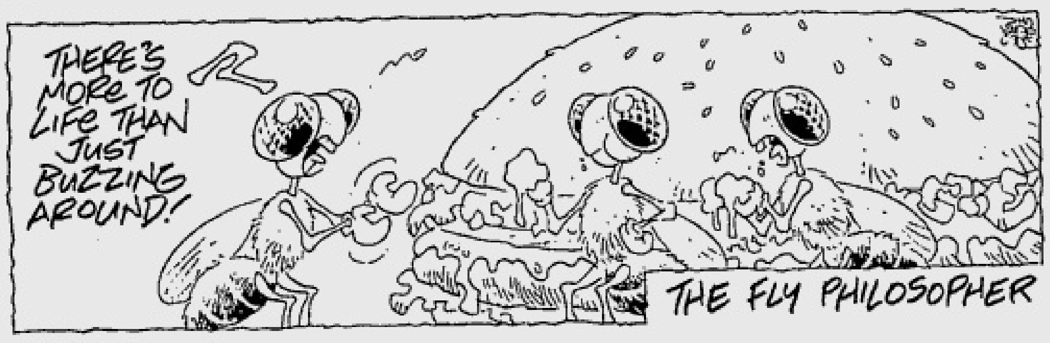
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


With my new coiffure, from now on I'll live life on the edge!
Yep! Nothing can faze me now. No more safety nets! Sock it to me, 2004!
TONK
OW!
The universe thinks it has a sense of humor.

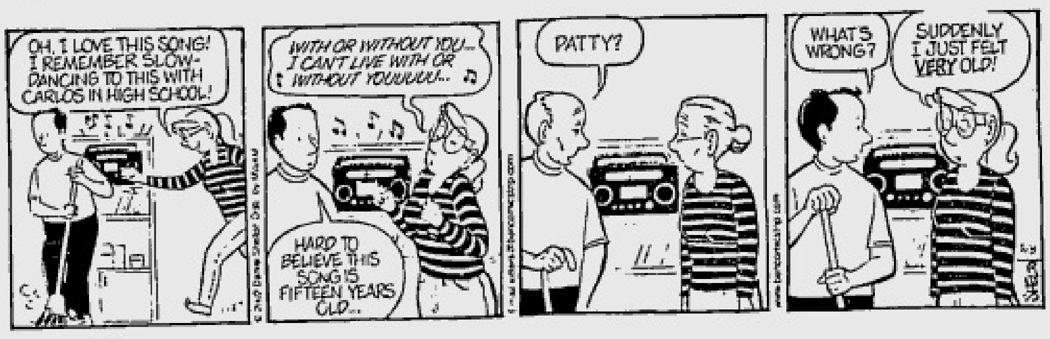
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN JUST BUZZING AROUND!
THE FLY PHILOSOPHER

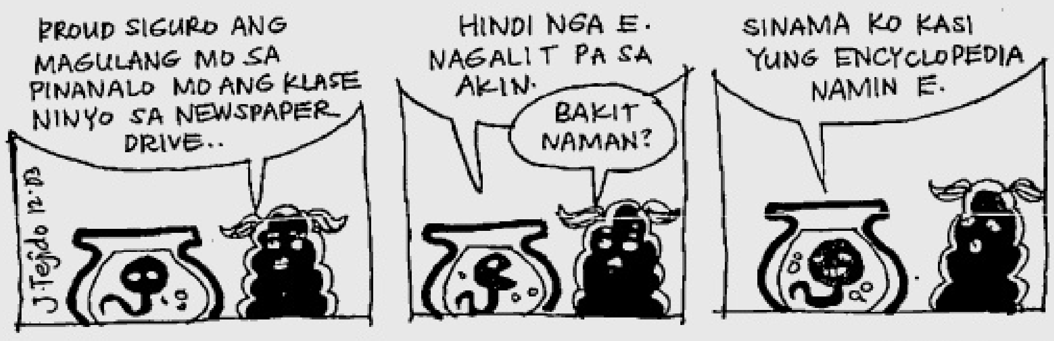
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OH, I LOVE THIS SONG! I REMEMBER SLOW-DANCING TO THIS WITH CARLOS IN HIGH SCHOOL!
WITH OR WITHOUT YOU... I CAN'T LIVE WITH OR WITHOUT YOUUUUU...
HARD TO BELIEVE THIS SONG IS FIFTEEN YEARS OLD...
PATTY?
WHAT'S WRONG?
SUDDENLY I JUST FELT VERY OLD!

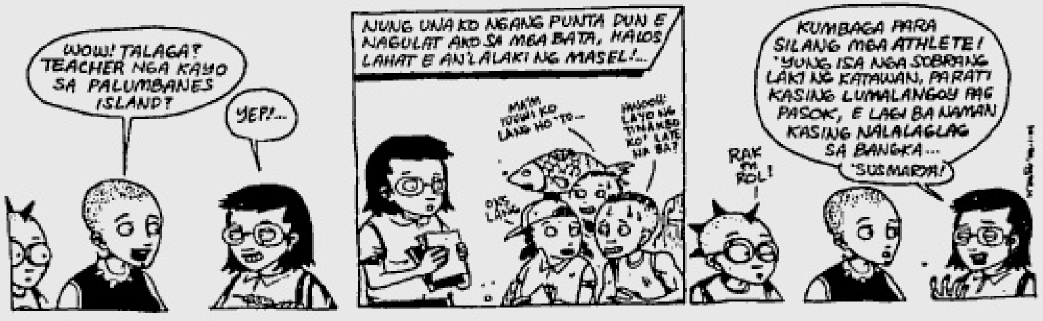
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PROUD SIGURO ANG MAGULANG MO SA PINANALO MO ANG KLASE NINYO SA NEWSPAPER DRIVE..
HINDI NGA E. NAGALIT PA SA AKIN.
BAKIT NAMAN?
SINAMA KO KASI YUNG ENCYCLOPEDIA NAMIN E.
J. Tejido 12.03

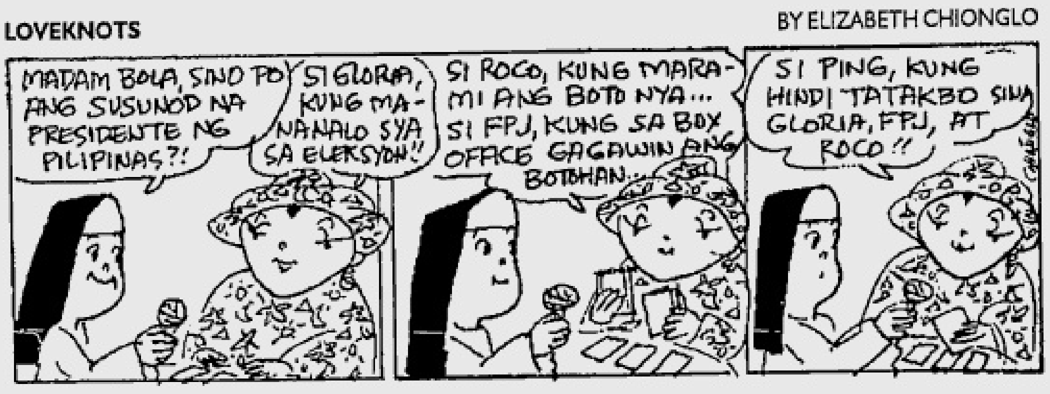
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


WOW! TALAGA? TEACHER NGA KAYO SA PALUMBANES ISLAND?
YEP!...
NUNG UNA KO NGANG PUNTA DUN E NAGULAT AKO SA MGA BATA, HALOS LAHAT E AN'LALAKI NG MASEL!...
KUMBAGA PARA SILANG MGA ATHLETE! 'YUNG ISA NGA SOBRANG LAKI NG KATAWAN, PARATI KASING LUMALANGOY PAG PASOK, E LAGI BA NAMAN KASING NALALAGLAG SA BANGKA...
'SUSMARYA!
RAK EN ROL!

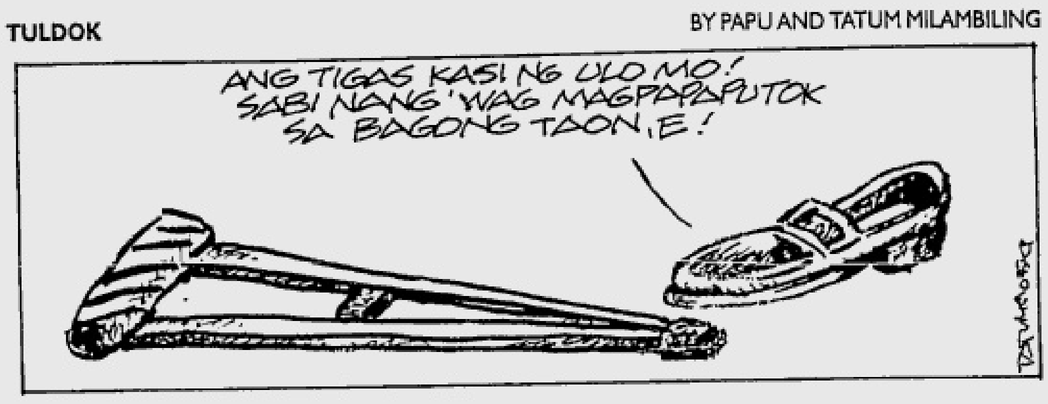
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MADAM BOLA, SINO PO ANG SUSUNOD NA PRESIDENTE NG PILIPINAS?!
SI GLORIA, KUNG MANANALO SYA SA ELEKSYON!!
SI ROCO, KUNG MARAMI ANG BOTO NYA... SI FPJ, KUNG SA BOX OFFICE GAGAWIN ANG BOTOHAN...
SI PING, KUNG HINDI TATAKBO SINA GLORIA, FPJ, AT ROCO!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ANG TIGAS KASI NG ULO MO! SABI NANG 'WAG MAGPAPAPUTOK SA BAGONG TAON, E!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are often true to one theme or one cause in your life. You are not fickle. You are courageous and not afraid of danger. However, privately you are searching for a deeper meaning in life. You are honest, adventurous and loyal. Work hard in the year ahead because your rewards will come in 2005.
Birthdate of: Howie Long, football player/broadcaster; Rowan Atkinson, actor; Tom Mix, silent-film cowboy.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Feel free to move forward with plans connected with higher education, publishing and travel. The delays of the past few weeks are suddenly gone.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Go ahead with plans to decide upon the division of shared property or the division of shared responsibilities. You see the best way to do things now; all you have to do is proceed.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Many glitches, delays and minor problems dogged your steps in the past month. These hangnail annoyances are now a thing of the past. You can act with confidence now.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can breathe a sigh of relief, because matters connected with work and employment are going to run much more smoothly starting today. Glory hallelujah!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Plans for vacations and creative escapes suddenly look more promising. What was canceled or delayed is now within your reach. (You can relax knowing that fun times are just around the corner.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Family reunions plus rehashing old business left you stalled in the water for a while. All that is past now. Move forward with your ideas to make improvements around your home.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Challenges with cars and trucks, and delays in ground transportation hit your pocketbook and tested your patience in the past month. From here on, you can expect things to flow more smoothly.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You can count on your money-making ideas now. All your efforts to boost your earnings and expand your work are blessed. Trust your luck!

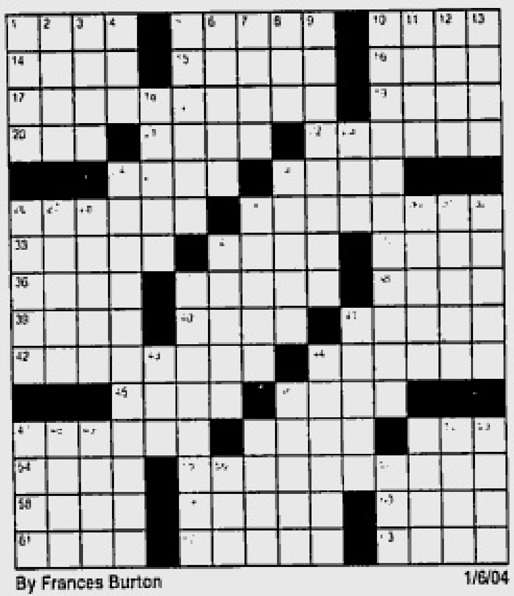
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): For weeks now, Mercury has been retrograde in your sign. (That's why you thought you were losing it!) Silly delays, confused conversations and lost items were a headache. That's over now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Trust your gut reaction to things today. Follow your inner instincts. You know what you want to do—so, go do it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't be afraid to make suggestions to groups and friends today. You will be surprised by how well-received your ideas are. Speak up!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your hopes and dreams about your career are starting to fall nicely into place. Move forward with confidence. Someone will help you now.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Frances Burton
Summerville, GA

1/6/04

ACROSS
1 Heroic recounting
5 Sandbank
10 Bit of reality
14 Fiery gem
15 Smackers
16 Composer Stravinsky
17 Leading indicator
19 Extinct bird
20 Draft letters
21 Pub pours
22 Thingamajig
24 Ants' home
25 Pell-__
26 Wooden shoes
29 Tape cartridge
33 Aromas
34 Woods of Paris
35 "That __ Cat"
36 Bird with a laughlike cry
37 Pickling solution
38 Yale grads
39 Vigoda and Lincoln
40 Provoke
41 Ta-ta, Gigi
42 Sequoias
44 Sharp fold
45 As soon as
46 Lion's locks
47 Open balcony
50 Indira's dress
51 Wind dir.
54 Genesis: abbr.
55 Vehement supporter
58 Con's quarters
59 Old MacDonald's refrain
60 Tizzy
61 Stockings
62 Philosopher Kierkegaard
63 Store lure

DOWN
1 Weeps
2 Mimics
3 Guys' sweeties
4 Still and __
5 Gets a noseful
6 Temporary residence
7 Aahs' partners
8 Beer choice
9 Generosity of spirit
10 Impatient expression
11 Keenly eager
12 Secret lingo
13 Horse's gait
18 Bides time
23 Gore and Capone
24 Deceive
25 Pine Tree State
26 Kind of system or panel
27 Clay-and-straw brick
28 Voiced disapproval
29 Spirals
30 Shire of "Rocky"
31 Attempts
32 Follow afterward
34 Wedding VIP
37 Heavy fabrics
41 Palmer of the PGA
43 Sailors' org.
44 Old-fashioned copy
46 First Lady of the '50s
47 Lomond or Ness
48 Dunkable treat
49 McDougald and Hodges
50 One pressing a suit?
51 Sicilian peak
52 Simon or Sedaka
53 Art Deco designer
56 __ de la Plata
57 Dunderhead

Monday's Puzzle Solved

M	A	D	A	M	■	A	L	A	S	■	A	S	A	P
E	N	O	L	A	■	D	O	D	O	■	L	E	N	O
R	O	L	E	S	■	A	R	A	L	■	I	R	I	S
C	A	T	C	H	A	N	D	R	E	L	E	A	S	E
■	■	■	■	E	R	O	S	■	M	I	N	C	E	D
P	O	M	A	D	E	■	■	S	N	L	■	■	■	■
A	M	O	R	■	G	O	R	E	■	A	T	S	E	A
C	A	T	C	H	A	S	C	A	T	C	H	C	A	N
E	R	O	S	E	■	L	A	T	H	■	E	A	R	N
■	■	■	■	A	D	D	■	■	O	D	E	N	S	E
E	S	C	A	P	E	■	T	I	N	E	■	■	■	■
S	H	O	E	S	T	R	I	N	G	C	A	T	C	H
T	I	N	S	■	E	I	R	E	■	A	L	O	H	A
O	N	T	O	■	S	T	E	F	■	L	I	N	E	N
P	E	E	P	■	T	E	S	T	■	S	T	E	W	S

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1/6/04

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

CITY NORTH EDSA

1 MANO PO 2
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 GAGAMBOY
8 FILIPINAS

CITY CEBU

1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY
4 FILIPINAS
5 BRIDAL SHOWER
6 MANO PO 2
7 MALIKMATA
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL

CITY BACOOR

1 FILIPINAS
2 MANO PO 2
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 GAGAMBOY
7 MALIKMATA
8 CRYING LADIES

CITY PAMPANGA

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 GAGAMBOY
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES

SUPER CTR. SUCAT

1 CRYING LADIES
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 FILIPINAS

BICUTAN

1 GAGAMBOY
2 MALIKMATA
3 MANO PO 2
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL

CITY MARILAO

1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 GAGAMBOY

STA. MESA

1 MANO PO 2
2 MALIKMATA
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 FANTASTIC MAN
6 GAGAMBOY
7 CRYING LADIES
8 BRIDAL SHOWER
9 GAGAMBOY
10 FILIPINAS

SOUTHMALL

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 FILIPINAS
3 CRYING LADIES
4 CAPTAIN BARBELL
5 GAGAMBOY
6 BNDAL SHOWER
7 MALIKMATA
8 FANTASTIC MAN
9 GAGAMBOY
10 MANO PO 2

CITY FAIRVIEW

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 GAGAMBOY
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 FANTASTIC MAN
7 MANO PO 2
8 CRYING LADIES
9 GAGAMBOY
10 MALIKMAFA
11 BRIDAL SHOWER
12 FILIPINAS

CITY DAVAO

1 MANO PO 2
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS
5 BRIDAL SHOWER
6 CRYING LADIES

CITY LUCENA

1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 MANO PO 2
4 GAGAMBOY

MEGAMALL

1 MANO PO 2
RESERVE-A-SEAT dial [illegible]
2 CRYING LADIES
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 MANO PO 2
5 BRIDAL SHOWER
6 GAGAMBOY
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 CRYING LADIES
9 MALIKMATA
10 FANTASTIC MAN
11 GAGAMBOY
12 FILIPINAS

CINEMA TUTUBAN

1 CAPTAIN BARBELL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 BRIDAL SHOWER

CITY ILOILO

1 MALIKMATA
2 RESERVED
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 GAGAMBOY
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2
7 RESERVED
8 CAPTAIN BARBELL

CITY MANILA

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 MANO PO 2
4 GAGAMBOY
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 FILIPINAS
9 CAPTAIN BARBELL
10 CRYING LADIES
11 GAGAMBOY
12 MALIKMATA

CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CRYING LADIES
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 MANO PO 2

CITY BAGUIO

1 MANO PO 2
2 MALIKMATA
3 CRYING LADIES
4 GAGAMBOY

THE PODIUM CINEMA

18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 - 85

1 CRYING LADIES
12:20 FS/12:50 MF/3:15/5:40/8:05/10:00 LFS/10:35 LMF/12:30 END

2 BRIDAL SHOWER
11:30 FS/12:00 MF/2:40/5:20/8:00/10:15 LFS/10:40 LMF/12:55 END

For Seat Reservation, call 633 8975 • LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS
Matinee P100.00 - Screening until 5pm • Monday thru Friday • Regular P120.00 - After 5pm • Saturday • Sunday • Holidays (Reserved Seating)

Movies are subject to change without prior notice

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Galleria

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687-0593

THX /All Digital

1 CRYING LADIES 11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:30 THX	4 FANTASTIC MAN 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
2 MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	5 BRIDAL SHOWER 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50	6 GAGAMBOY 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
7 HOMECOMING 12:20, 2:30, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00	9 FILIPINAS 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
8 MALIKMATA 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30	10 CRYING LADIES 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:0[illegible]

MATINEE PRICE: **P100** THX cinema / **P75** 1level cinemas
Mon.- Fri. / 10am- 4pm (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)

Ermita

526-7185
536-7809 to 12

1 MANO PO 2 - 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 10:00
2 FANTASTIC MAN - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
3 MALIKMATA - 10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:50
4 BRIDAL SHOWER - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
5 CAPTAIN BARBEL - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
6 GAGAMBOY - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
7 CRYING LADIES - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00

Metro East

Marcos hway
682-8193/99
682-8280

1 MALIKMATA
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 MANO PO 2
4 FILIPINAS
5 CRYING LADIES
6 CAPTAIN BARBELL
7 FANTASTIC MAN
8 GAGAMBOY

Novaliches

935-3229 / 31

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS
3 MALIKMATA
4 CRYING LADIES
5 CAPTAIN BARBELL
6 MANO PO 2
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8 GAGAMBOY

Cainta

Brgy. Sto. Domingo, Ortigas Extension

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CRYING LADIES
3 GAGAMBOY
4 FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon

Concepcion
288-0985/2575

1 CRYING LADIES
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 GAGAMBOY

Sta. Rosa Laguna (049)837-0907		Lipa, Batangas [illegible] (043)757-3664/312-5870
FANTASTIC MAN	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
GAGAMBOY	4	MALIKMATA
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	CRYING LADIES

Dasmariñas		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5858
GAGAMBOY	1	FANTASTIC MAN
CRYING LADIES	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	GAGAMBOY

Bacolod (034)441-0458/59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
GAGAMBOY	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
MALIKMATA	5	GAGAMBOY
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

Star Mills

San Fernando, Pampanga
(045)875-1927
(045)961-5270

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPTAIN BARBELL
3 FILIPINAS
4 GAGAMBOY
5 CRYING LADIES
6 MANO PO 2

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CINEMA 1 BRIDAL SHOWER - R13
11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
Advance Selling - LOTR 3 (P150)

CINEMA 2 CRYING LADIES - P13
11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00
Advance Selling - LOTR 3 (P150)

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CHRISTIAN VAZQUEZ RODEL VELAYO
BOOTS ANSON ROA GINA PAREÑO

Bridal Shower

"Funny. Sexy. Sophisticated. The cast is lovable." -Mario Hernando, Malaya

"Absolutely the most enjoyable film among all entries!" -Billy Balbastro, Abante

"This movie heralds the renaissance of new Pinoy sex-comedy." -Jenina Ali, Phil. Daily Inquirer

"Bridal Shower succeeds in making us roar with laughter. A must-see!" -Mario Bautista, People's J.

Directed by JEFFREY JETURIAN — SEIKO FILMS Production

MTRCB RATING ▶ G General Patronage — ALL AGES ADMITTED

BEST PICTURE

(Gatpuno Antonio J. Villegas Cultural Awardee)

Best Actress- Maricel Soriano
Best Actor- Richard Gomez
(Smart People's Choice for Best Actor)
Best Supporting Actor- Victor Neri
Best Screenplay- Roy Iglesias

Wagi sa Awards!
Wagi sa puso ng pamilyang Pilipino!

Filipinas
Gabi ng Parangal
VIVA

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2003 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

MTRCB RATING ▶ G General Patronage — ALL AGES ADMITTED

Sa libo-libo't sangkatutak na mga batang nanuod ng-
MARAMING MARAMING SALAMAT
sa inyo Captain Barbell, Darna at Lastikman
MARS RAVELO'S
CAPTAIN BARBELL

Directed by: Mac C. Alejandro

NOW SHOWING EVERYWHERE

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Co-owners trying to save Country...

From page A24

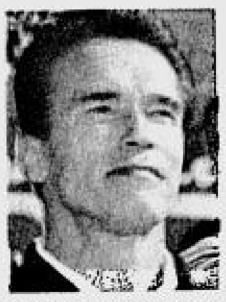
ever we could, like plates, cups and mugs," another worker told Inquirer Entertainment yesterday. "I heard that workers in other stores took home some of the swiping machines."

The employee said they have not received their 13th month bonus. They were only given P500 to P1,000 each in advance, he added.

"That's why we discourage customers from using their credit cards to pay for their bills," the employee said.

The Nieveras brought the California restaurant chain to the Philippines, which now has branches in Greenhills, San Juan, Quezon City, Makati and Alabang.

Marinel R. Cruz



SCHWARZENEGGER

Arnold...

From page A23

"To me, California is a dreamland. It has all the money in the world, show business, wonderful weather, the ocean, snow skiing in the winter—but you can also go to the desert the same day. And you have beautiful-looking people there—they all have a tan!

"I believe strongly in the philosophy of staying hungry. If you have a dream and it becomes a reality, don't stay satisfied with it too long. Make up a new dream, and work hard to turn it into reality!

"I am a strong believer in the Western philosophy of success, of progress, of getting rich. Eastern philosophy is passive, which I believe in maybe three percent of the time, while the remaining 97 percent is Western and going on. It's a wonderful philosophy, and America should keep it up!"

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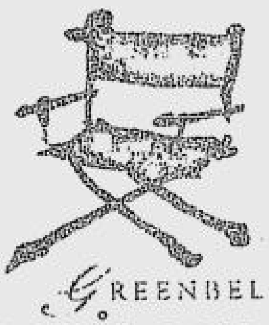
OPENS JAN. 9 AT ALL AYALA CINEMAS

MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

AYALA CINEMAS



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G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MANO PO 2	1 BRIDAL SHOWER	ArtFilm 1 GAGAMBOY	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 MANO PO 2	THX 1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 FILIPINAS	2 BRIDAL SHOWER	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 CRYING LADIES	2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 MALIKMATA	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 MANO PO 2	Onstage M. BUTTERFLY JAN. 8, 9, 10 & 11	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS	3 MANO PO 2
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 BRIDAL SHOWER	4 MALIKMATA
	5 GAGAMBOY		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 GAGAMBOY	5 GAGAMBOY
	6 CRYING LADIES			
	7 CAPTAIN BARBEL			

For sreening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 and send to 2333. Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

BRIDAL SHOWER R13 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 10:10	GAGAMBOY GP 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	MANO PO 2 GP 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
CRYING LADIES PG13 12:20, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50, 10:20	BRIDAL SHOWER R13 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30	FILIPINAS GP 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BRIDAL SHOWER
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	OLD CREEK MAYOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

CONGRATULATIONS BOSSING, ANG NO. 1
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Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 MALIKMATA
3 (DTS) FANTASTIC MAN
4 GOLD (DTS) MANO PO-2
5 GOLD (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
6 GOLD (SDDS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 GOLD (DOLBY) MANO PO-2
8 CRYING LADIES
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 GAGAMBOY

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
2 (DOLBY) MANO PO
3 (DOLBY) GAGAMBOY
4 (DOLBY) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 833.3274
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 GAGAMBOY
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 FANTASTIC MAN
CAPT. BARBEL
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) MANO PO-2
5

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 GAGAMBOY
2 CRYING LADIES
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 MALIKMATA
6 CAPT BARBEL

M star
www.clickthecity.com.ph (Las Pinas) tel 873.5004
1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPT BARBEL

PREMIERE CINEMA
(Makati City) tel 892.2503
THX

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MALIKMATA
2 CAPT BARBEL

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 GAGAMBOY

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588
5 GAGAMBOY
6 CAPT BARBEL
7 (DTS) CRYING LADIES
8 (SDDS) FANTASTIC MAN
9 (DOLBY) BRIDAL SHOWER

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 MANO PO-2
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 (SDDS) GAGAMBOY
5 MALIKMATA
6 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
7 (DTS) CAPT. BARBEL
8 BRIDAL SHOWER
9 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083
1 CAPT BARBEL
2 (SDDS) BRIDAL SHOWER
3 (DTS) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DOLBY) GAGAMBOY
5 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795
1 GAGAMBOY
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 (DTS) CAPT. BARBEL
4 MANO PO-2
5 (SDDS) BRIDAL SHOWER

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470
1 RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724
Dilson FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
Lords BRIDAL SHOWER

Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA
3 GAGAMBOY
4 CAPT. BARBEL

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238
1 (DOLBY) MANO PO-2
2 CAPT BARBEL
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 CAPT BARBEL
2 GAGAMBOY

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7
1 MANO PO-2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL) CAPT. BARBEL
4 (SDDS) CRYING LADIES
5 (DTS) MALIKMATA
6 GAGAMBOY
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8
9

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 MANO PO-2
4 CAPT BARBEL

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MANO PO-2
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 (DOLBY) MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 MANO PO-2
2 CAPT BARBEL
3 (DTS) BRIDAL SHOWER

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 (DTS) MALIKMATA
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 CAPT BARBEL
2 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
3 (DTS) MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel (075) 568.6771
1 GAGAMBOY
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 CRYING LADIES
2 GAGAMBOY
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DTS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel)
1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY
4 (DTS) BRIDAL SHOWER

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) CAPT BARBEL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558
1 CAPT BARBEL
2 GAGAMBOY
3 FANTASTIC MAN

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 (DTS) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DOLBY) GAGAMBOY

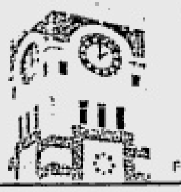
Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914
1 (DTS) CAPT BARBEL

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 MALIKMATA
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657
1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 GAGAMBOY

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS



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Happy birthday, Sharon!

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

IT'S **Sharon Cuneta**'s birthday today and I feel this urge to devote this column to her for all the wonderful things she has been to my mom and to me.

I know that if my mom were still alive, she would do the same thing.

It's more than coincidence that the Megastar's birthday falls on Jan. 6, which used to be celebrated as the Feast of the Three Kings and as the culmination of the holiday season. With Sharon's selfless nature, Christmas never really ends for the people close to her. I'd like to think that she was brought into this world on Jan. 6 to keep the holiday spirit alive long after the calendar says that it's supposed to be over.

I grew up watching Sha's movies and listening to her records. Her song "It's Not You," from her album "Sixteen," was my daily get-up-and-go soundtrack.

My mom always loved interviewing Sha because she has got depth and warmth. Over the years, my mom and Sha developed a certain bond. Even if she didn't hang around our house the way some stars did, Sha made her presence felt in my ma's life more than all those stars who were almost permanent fixtures in our place.

THE MEGASTAR. Inday Badiday loved her like her own daughter.

Even if there was no special occasion, Sha would send my ma little things like a book she just read. I came across an inspirational book she gave my ma, and the dedication read: "My Dearest **Ate Luds**, This used to be mine. Now I want you to have it. Love you.—Sha"

My daughter's childhood idol was Sharon and the highlight of all her birthday parties was Sha's arrival. Sha didn't just drop by; she even had **KC** in tow. To this day when I bump into her, KC still remembers those kiddie parties.

Sha and I gave birth in the same year and we both had unsuccessful first marriages. I have learned much from her. But if there's one thing that stands out in my mind (this is also one of my ma's fave words of wisdom from Sha), it's that we should never walk out of a relationship when we're already broken inside. We should leave with our self-respect intact.

My cousin **Kara Magsanoc Alikpala** fondly remembers how Sha enjoyed cooking her yummy carbonara in Boston and how giddy she was when she received her grades in English in the mail. She got an A! Considering her stature, Sha still dreams of finishing college someday. Most stars just dump their studies for show biz after one hit movie. They should take the cue from the megastar and keep in mind another gem of a line from her: "I consider every pay check as my last one."

I've heard countless anecdotes from production assistants, bit players, etc. about how the megastar overextended herself for them. I know Sha would rather not draw attention to the good deeds she has done, but she must forgive me for squealing on her in behalf of the legions of people whose lives she helped change for the better. It's not about money or politics or show biz. It's the way she really is. Seeing her wanting simple joys makes the megastar all the more megahuman.

Happy, happy birthday, Sha! Even sans the trappings of success, you will always be a beautiful person inside-out. Thank you for loving my mom as much as your own. I can vouch for how she loved you like a daughter, too. No doubt she's watching over you and feeling happy, grateful and proud.

For feedback e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

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Arnold goes from dream to dream

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

TO some people, **Arnold Schwarzenegger** is just a muscleman who has made a lot of money as an action star, and has parlayed his popularity into a fledgling political career that, following **Ronald Reagan**'s master play, hopes to take him from governor of California to president of the USA.

People who know Schwarzenegger better don't have quite a simplistic view of him. Taking their cue from his own self-analysis, they see that his success, in sports, show business and now politics, has never been due to luck or happenstance: "When I was 10 years old in Austria, I had the dream of becoming the best of the world in something. When I was 15, the dream became specific: I wanted to be the best bodybuilder in the world.

"It was not only a dream I dreamed at night, it was also a daydream. Five years of hard work later, I turned the dream into reality and became Mr. Universe.

"Winning is the very important word. It singles out the one who achieves what he wants, as opposed to the hundreds of thousands who fail.

"My dream was not just to be big physically, but big in a way that people would listen to me when I talked. I also wanted to end up in America, rather than in a little country like Austria. I did so in 1968, when I was 21 years old.

"Number one in America pretty much takes care of the rest of the world. That's why I'm trying to make people here appreciate what they have, instead of taking it for granted.

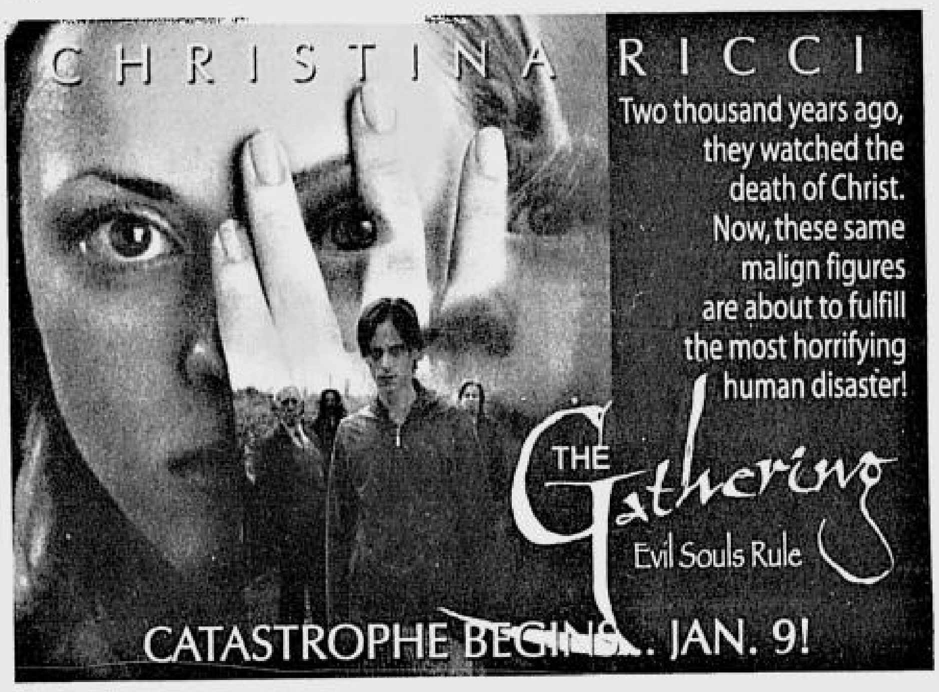
"One of the things I always had was a business mind. When I came over here, I learned English practically from scratch, and started taking business courses, because that's what America is best known for—business.

"But, after you make money, you have to know how to keep it. And make more of it. I own apartment buildings, office buildings, raw land. That's my love, real estate.

"I have emotions, just like anybody else. But, when you compete to win, you must control your emotions, you must have command over yourself. Before competing, I can't be distracted by other people's problems. This is sometimes seen as selfishness. But it's the only way you can be, if you want to achieve something big.

"You have to choose very early on what you really want: a normal life, or to become an achiever. I went on the road I thought best for me. Some people thought I was cold, selfish. Later, they found out that wasn't the case. After I achieve my goal, I can be Mr. Nice Guy. You know what I mean?

ARNOLD/ A22



CHRISTINA RICCI
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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

Edu 'not afraid' of VRB job

By Marinel R. Cruz

"I'M NOT afraid," Edu Manzano said of his new job as chair of the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB). "More people are killed for singing 'My Way' than for (stopping the piracy of audio-video materials). I know I'll be okay."

The actor, former vice mayor of Makati City and former president of the Actors Guild of the Philippines, is replacing Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., who is running for senator in the May elections.

MANZANO

Manzano, 48, host of "Magandang Umaga Bayan," "Asap Mania" and "Star in a Million," all on ABS-CBN, was appointed yesterday by President Macapagal-Arroyo to the post left vacant by Bong's resignation.

"I've received a call from Malacañang informing me of my appointment," Edu said. He said his experience as Makati vice mayor from 1998 to 2001 "prepared me for this daunting task." But he added that he was not afraid of the risks that go with the job, including expected threats to his life from manufacturers and distributors of pirated materials.

He admitted he has not yet thoroughly studied the anti-piracy law, but added that he wants it made "more dynamic."

"The law has to be pro-active," he said. "It has to adopt to the times."

As president of the Actors' Guild, he provided scholarship grants to actor-members and their families, as well as housing loans and health insurance.

The National Press Club and the Consumers Union of the Philippines honored him as an outstanding vice mayor.

Edu ran for mayor of Makati in 2001 but lost to Jejomar Binay.

Co-owners trying to save Country Waffles

MORE workers of Country Waffles yesterday admitted they took valuables from the restaurant chain because they have not been paid their salaries for as long as five months now.

Singer Bert Nievera and his wife Carol, Country Waffles franchise operators, reportedly flew to the US before Christmas, and they are said to have left millions in debt to several people, including show biz figures like Annabel Rama, Ayen Munji-Laurel and Jinky Llamanzares' mom, Mila.

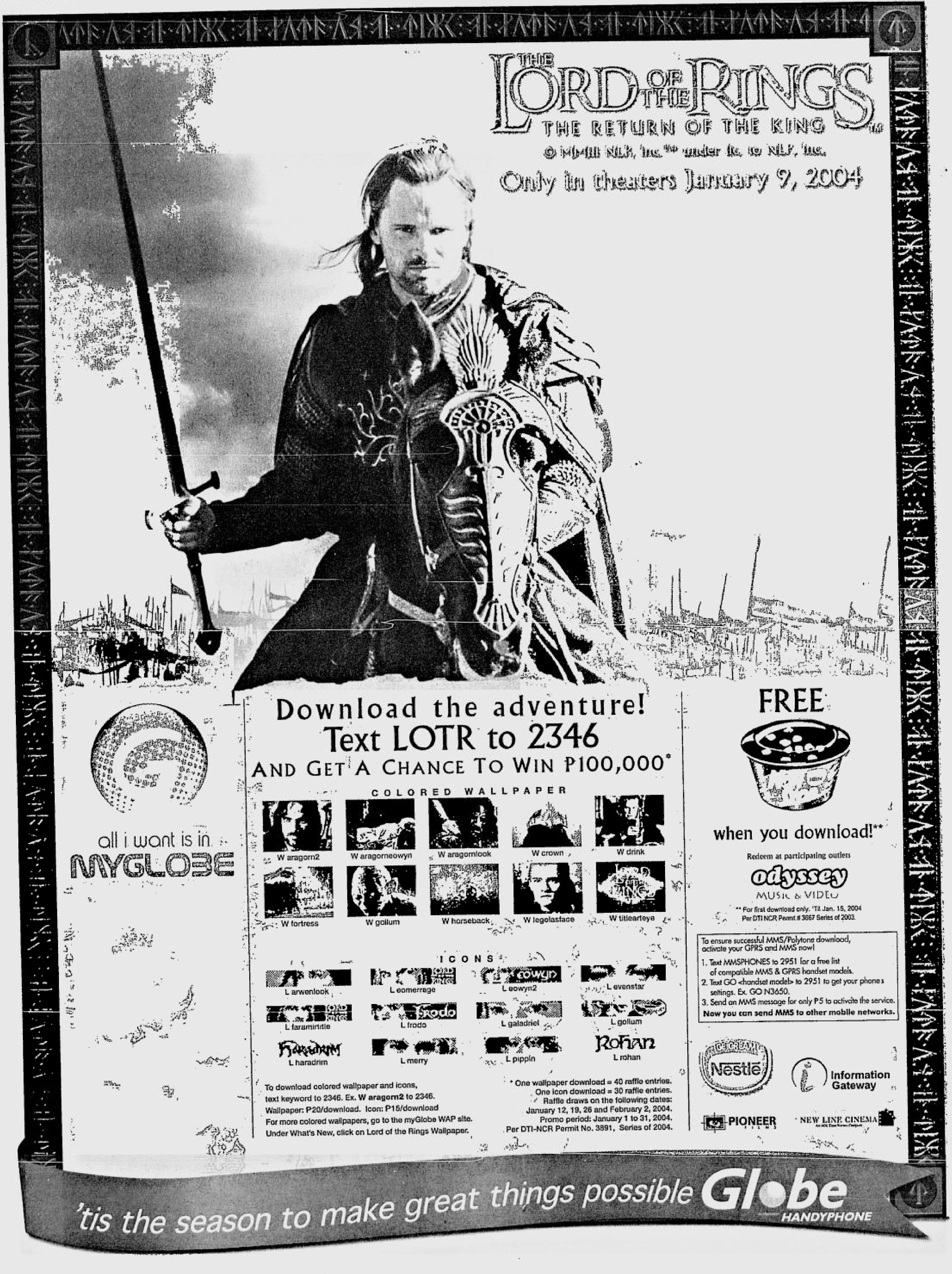
A source said Bert owes his son, singer Martin Nievera, about P3 million. Martin is in the US for a series of shows in Las Vegas.

Yesterday afternoon, Country Waffles co-owners were meeting at a Country Waffles restaurant in Quezon City to discuss the financial problem.

"They don't want to close all the restaurants," a Country Waffles employee said. "They are trying to save the business."

"Some of us took home what-

CO-OWNERS A22



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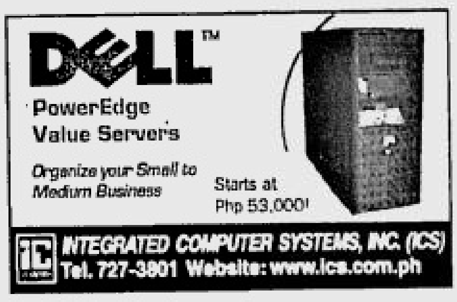

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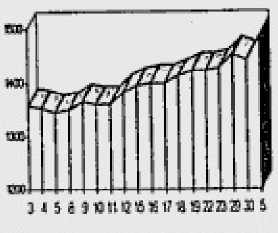
Stocks surge 3.12%, hit 33-mo. high

By Doris C. Dumlao

STOCKS rose by 3.12 percent to hit a 33-month high yesterday, with buying sparked by rosy profit hopes for bluechips, particularly Philippine Long Distance Co., and the prospective new wave of bank mergers arising from the planned purchase by taipan Henry Sy of a 29-percent stake in Equitable PCI Bank.



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Recent political developments, particularly the announcement of the Macapagal-Arroyo-Noli de Castro tandem, also boosted the stock market performance yesterday, according to analysts.

Contrary to expectations that the local bourse might succumb to profit-taking after a strong yearend rally, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index closed 44.97 points up at 1,487.34, the highest since March 2001, with value turnover of P774 million.

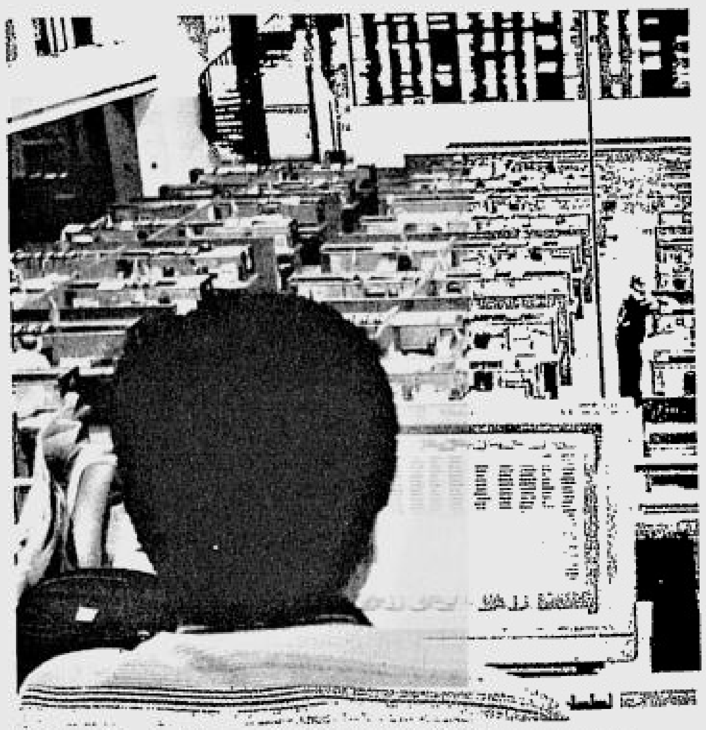
Analysts said the market seemed pleased with political developments that favored the reelection of incumbent President Macapagal, as well as with the positive prospects in the corporate sector.

"Many view the Macapagal-de Castro tandem as winnable. The opposition seems to be crumbling," AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan said.

Shares of Equitable PCI Bank, the country's third biggest lender, rose 14.93 percent to close at P38.50 per share following the announcement, by the Sy camp that Banco De Oro Universal Bank was buying the 29-percent stake of the Social Security System in the bank.

BDO shares gained by 4.23 percent to close at P18.50, as a possible merger with Equitable PCI would catapult its ranking in the banking system from 9th to 2nd biggest in assets.

The market also got a big boost from consistent favorite Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., whose share price climbed back to the P1,000 level yesterday on the back of an optimistic earnings outlook. PLDT shares rose by 5.15 percent to close at P1,020 yesterday. Company vice president for media affairs Butch Jimenez said the group had likely met its 2003 net income target of P9.5 billion to P10 billion despite provisions for staff cuts and was on the way to a "sterling performance in 2004."



DEALERS look at the monitoring board at the Philippine Stock Exchange, where the composite index hit a 33-month high yesterday, lifted by talks of a merger between Banco de Oro and Equitable PCI Bank and hopes for good profits this year. AFP

Globe Telecom shares, likewise, jumped by 5.81 percent to close at P910 also on the back of bullish earnings prospects for this year.

In the meantime, BDO ruled out the possibility of a tender offer as the 29-percent stake it acquired was still below the 35-percent threshold mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Banking sources also clarified that Equitable PCI Bank was not able to pass a new resolution on a stricter tender offering last year, which would have made it difficult for Henry Sy's group to buy into the bank.

Under the tender offer requirement, a party buying a block of

STOCKS/ B2

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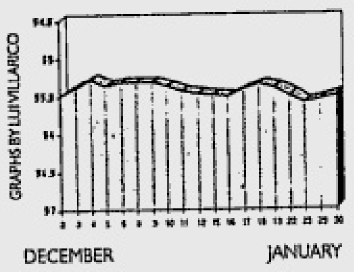

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January 5, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.794155019	1.000000	55.586000
Japan	Yen	0.00742	0.009343	0.519300
United Kingdom	Pound	1.424238	1.793400	99.687900
Hongkong	Dollar	0.102304	0.128821	7.160600
Switzerland	Franc	0.641379	0.807624	44.892600
Canada	Dollar	0.616532	0.776337	43.153500
Singapore	Dollar	0.466684	0.587648	32.665000
Australia	Dollar	0.601724	0.757691	42.117000
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.106624	2.652661	147.450800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.211769	0.266660	14.822600
Brunei	Dollar	0.465316	0.585926	32.569300
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.0201	0.025310	1.406900
UAE	Dirham	0.216226	0.272272	15.134500
Euro	Euro	1	1.259200	69.993900
Argentina	Peso	0.271971	0.342466	19.036300
Brazil	REAL	0.27594	0.347464	19.314100
Denmark	Kroner	0.1343	0.169110	9.400100
India	Rupee	0.017423	0.021939	1.219500
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.209016	0.263193	14.629800
Mexico	New Peso	0.071645	0.090216	5.014700
New Zealand	Dollar	0.522884	0.658415	36.598700
Norway	Kroner	0.119234	0.150139	8.345600
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013896	0.017498	0.972600
South Africa	Rand	0.121245	0.152672	8.486400
Korea	Won	0.000665	0.000837	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110515	0.139161	7.735400
Syria	Pound	0.017947	0.022599	1.256200
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.02344	0.029516	1.640700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000498	0.000627	0.034900

INTEREST RATES

January 05, 2004-MART1 Benchmark Interest Rates	Rates MART1 5-Jan-04	MART1 30-Dec-03
1 Month	6.3857	6.3904
3 Months	6.45	6.45
6 Months	7.3558	7.3732
1 Year	8.3196	8.3517
2 Years	9.2183	9.4167
3 Years	10.1783	10.275
4 Years	10.5	10.5967
5 Years	10.8317	10.8867
7 Years	11.3683	11.5232
10 Years	11.6617	11.79
20 Years	12.0283	12.0033
25 Years	12.3483	12.3267

SOURCE : MART/BLOOMBERG

91-day T-bill yield down 29 basis points

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE GOVERNMENT'S cost of local borrowing eased yesterday, the first treasury bill auction of the year, as the benchmark 91-day rate dropped by 28.6 basis points to 6.246 percent in view of a huge demand from banks..

The 182-day bill also fell by 14.5 basis points to 7.441 percent but the 364-day debt paper went up by 19.26 basis points.

In yesterday's auction, the government raised P3 billion from the sale of three-month treasury bills, P3.5 billion from six-month bills, and P4.5 billion from one-year debt notes. Tenders reached P13.62 billion.

"This is a very good start for us. It will allow the government to maintain a healthy of cash position. Clearly, the market has accumulated liquidity last month when there was no auction and it needed to reinvest the cash it has," said National Treasurer Sergio Edeza.

The government's cash position stood at P44 billion by the end of 2003.

He said the Treasury had accepted higher bids for the 364-day bills as the secondary market rate for similar debt paper was already fetching about 8.3 percent. Edeza added that the increased volume for the one-year debt notes naturally encouraged the market to seek higher returns for placements.

Edeza said domestic interest rates would likely remain stable in the next two weeks as banks were attracting more deposits and thus, would need investment outlets.

The absence of private sector borrowers will force banks to continue placing their excess liquidity in risk-free government securities.

The government had projected that the 91-day rate would average at between 7.5 and 8.5 percent this year.

Edeza, however, believed that the benchmark rate would average at about 7 percent, if not lower, despite prevailing political jitters.

Edeza said the government would continue to issue other forms of debt papers, including retail bonds, this year.

"We usually sell the RTBs (retail treasury bonds) in the second half. We will still do that this year," said the treasurer. Retail bonds are sold to small investors.

The government sold P74.3 billion worth of three-and five-year RTBs in July and another P31 billion of three-year RTBs in November. The Treasury had shelved the December treasury bill auctions after selling the retail bonds.

In the first quarter of the year, the Treasury will sell P11 billion worth of treasury bills every other week and P4.5 billion of treasury bonds weekly.

Finance to sell $1B in Napocor bonds

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance may sell $1 billion worth of National Power Corp. bonds, which are being held by the department, to raise the remaining $750 million in funding requirement this year.

This option will replace an earlier plan to issue dollar-denominated bonds.

Napocor, for its part, will likely push through with the issuance of $500 million worth of bonds. The proceeds of the issue, which will be underwritten by ING Barings, will be used to pay maturing obligations and capital expenditure estimated at between $1.2 billion and $2 billion this year.

"We may opt to unload our Napocor bonds so we will not have to go to the market to issue new bonds," said National Treasurer Sergio Edeza.

Last month, the government unloaded $100 million worth of Napocor bonds to beef up the state coffers. The The bonds were issued by Napocor in exchange for the dollars that the national government borrowed on its behalf.

In 2003, the government sold $500 million in 10-year global bonds and relent half to the ailing power firm. In July, it sold $750-million in similar-dated bonds and lent the entire proceeds to Napocor.

The debt-saddled power company has yet to firm up its funding requirements for next year, but the amount would depend on the progress of its privatization.

However, given the difficulty being encountered by the state-owned power firm in borrowing, the national government may end up raising most of the requirement of Napocor on top of completing its $1.8-billion financing requirement.

"If we sell the Napocor bonds, the national government will use the proceeds. We can no longer relend it to Napocor," said Edeza. *Clarissa S. Batino*

PAL converting Boeing 747 plane

FLAG carrier Philippine Airlines Inc. is converting one of its Boeing 747 aircraft into a passenger-cargo plane to take advantage of the open skies policy in the Clark Special Economic Zone and Subic Freeport.

PAL president and chief operating officer Avelino Zapanta said the airline had to do something to take advantage of Executive Order No. 253, which lifted restrictions on capacity and aircraft type for cargo airlines in the two areas.

He explained that while declaring open skies in the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport and the Subic Bay International Airport would be detrimental to the country in the long run, nothing more could be done but to take advantage of it.

"(Open skies there) will have a very negative impact. That's why we have resolved to start converting our 747 aircraft into a combination aircraft. Our fifth 747 aircraft is coming anyway, so we're converting one 747 into a combination plane from purely passenger," he said.

A B747, if used as a purely passenger aircraft, has a capacity of 463 seats, plus 40 tons of cargo on itsbelly. On the other hand, if the plane will be used for pure cargo carriage, it can carry 100 tons of cargo plus the 40 tons in its belly.

Upon conversion into a combination aircraft, however, the plane will have a capacity of 200 to 250 seats and 90 tons of cargo, including the 40 tons that can be accommodated in the plane's belly.

Zapanta said this was part of PAL's efforts to take advantage of what could be a very disadvantageous order from the President.

A compromise deal for not giving in to the United States' request for seventh freedom rights for cargo carriers was how he saw the signing of EO No. 253.

"Looks like President Macapagal-Arroyo went into a compromise. The (US air panel) didn't get what they wanted during the negotiations, so we just gave them open skies in Clark and Subic," he said. *Abigail L. Ho*

Meralco to start 3rd phase of ₱30-B refund this month

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MANILA Electric Co. yesterday said it would start to implement this month phase 3 of the P30-billion refund to customers, as it neared the completion of phase 2 involving P4.6 billion.

Leonardo Mabale, chief of Meralco's refund management task force, said in an interview that some residential and general service (RGS) customers—such as variety stores—classified under phase 3 would be notified within this month on how and when they could claim their money.

Based on an Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) order, Meralco should start this month the third phase, which covers RGS customers who used more than 300 kilowatt-hours in April 2003.

According to Meralco, phase 3 covers 823,000 customers and will cost P4.91 billion.

"But we are notifying only those who used 301-320 kWh about the refund," Mabale said.

The official explained that Meralco was still awaiting the ERC's decision on its motion for the reconsideration of an earlier order to implement Phase 3 from January until June this year.

"Meralco is appealing to the ERC to extend the implementation period up to December," Mabale said. "When the ERC decides on this, we can then draw up a complete plan on how to refund all Phase 3 customers."

Also, Mabale said Meralco expected to wrap up the refund to phase 2 customers by mid-January.

The second phase covers about 2.25 million customers who used between 101 kilowatt-hours and 300 kWh in April 2003.

When asked how much the company had so far disbursed, Mabale said the information was not yet available.

However, he pointed out that Meralco was shelling out at least P6.7 billion entirely from internal funds for Phase 1 and 2 in a span of six months.

Last month, Meralco officials denied allegations that it was raising its rates by 12 centavos per kWh starting January to raise money for the refund.

The hike was provisionally approved by the ERC, which would start on Jan. 12 the public hearings on Meralco's petition for a rate increase of 13.58 centavos per kWh.

Meralco has yet to hurdle the fourth, final and most costly phase of the refund—P18.6 billion—covering commercial and industrial customers.

Singapore asks RP to start tariff cuts in May

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES is given until May this year to implement the tariff reduction on selected imports from Singapore, a key to the settlement of the petrochemical row between the two countries.

Ramon Vicente Kabigting, director of the Bureau of International Trade Relation, said in a year-end briefing that the government was already reviewing what Singaporean products could be covered by the lowering of duties.

The Philippines and Singapore agreed in September 2003, during the Asean Economic Ministers Meeting held in Cambodia, to end their petrochemical tariff dispute. Under the agreement, the Philippines will compensate Singapore with $4 million to $5 million worth of tariff reductions. The lowering of tariffs should take effect within a three-year period.

The tariff dispute between the two countries stemmed from the failure of the Philippines to reduce the tariffs on petrochemical products to 5 percent as scheduled in the Common Effective Preferential Treatment scheme (CEPT) of the Asean Free Trade Agreement.

SINGAPORE/ B2

Gov't exceeded budget gap ceiling in Dec.

THE MACAPAGAL administration has likely exceeded its P12.3-billion deficit ceiling in December due to increased spending, but the full-year figure remained within the P202-billion target, according to National Treasurer Sergio Edeza.

"The budget department settled some account payables in the last two days of the year. I think expenditures are higher than programmed so we will likely exceed the December deficit ceiling, but it is a foregone conclusion that we met the full-year target," said Edeza.

The treasurer said actual revenue exceeded the target for the year of P584 billion by about P36 billion. He did not say how the expenditure side fared as against the P786-billion ceiling.

Revenue in December must hit P51 billion while spending should be contained within P63.3 billion to meet last month's target. Edeza said the Bureau of Internal Revenue was expected to have met its P424-billion full-year collection target in 2003.

The added expenses stemmed from the P5,000 cash gift given to each government employee last month. On top of that, Edeza said that some contractual obligations were paid.

"It is better for the government to reduce its account payables and simply meet the deficit target for the year," said the treasurer. The budget department said it would settle P60 billion of the government's P112 billion in outstanding account payables this year.

Budget Undersecretary Laura Pascua said the government paid about P38 billion in obligations last year.

The fiscal discipline shown by the government in 2003 did not impress Moody's Investors Service, which had said it would likely downgrade its rating on the country's sovereign credit. An official of the credit rating agency said this year's budget deficit ceiling of P197.8 billion would be hard to meet.

Edeza said the Moody's downgrade would be ignored by the market unless the rating firm would cut the rating two notches lower. *Clarissa S. Batino*

To rate the hero

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

THEY are fast over at the Department of Trade and Industry. The DTI was the department of Mr. Palengke, Manuel A. Roxas, who is running for senator.

It is not yet too late for the hero of market vendors. For one, Mar Roxas shares the same name with the first President of the Republic, who was his grandfather.

The "A" in Mar's name, of course, stands for Araneta, as in the Araneta Center, which also has the Farmers Market.

I mean, this guy has an impressive pedigree. Look, Mr. Palengke's family owns a huge first class wet market.

But where was I? Of course we were talking about the DTI, which responded to my piece about their mess in the garment export quota immediately.

I mean the DTI wrote me a letter on the very same day I came out with an item about how, thanks to the GTEB, some big garment exporters lost tons of money.

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THAT'S the Garments and Textile Export Board, or the GTEB, which is the government firm overseeing the garment export industry.

The head of the GTEB is Serafin Juliano, brother of Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, who was the high school classmate of Gloriaetta.

The GTEB is under the supervision of the DTI. It was thus my honor to receive a letter from the mother unit, the DTI itself—and not just the prodigal son GTEB.

The letter was signed by Trade and Industry Undersecretary Thomas Aquino, who, I gathered, is a career man at the DTI, in charge of international trade.

Why Aquino wrote me the letter, and not Juliano, may not be an indication of whether or not Aquino micromanages the GTEB all the time.

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ANYWAY, Aquino's letter reads:

"Thank you for your interest in the developments in the garments industry as written in your column today (Dec. 29, Monday). The DTI- GTEB and the industry are aware of the problems and have agreed to take a common course of action these past eight weeks.

"The government is continuously negotiating with the United States for the best possible terms in transitioning to a quota-less regime. We successfully secured a special shift arrangement from the United States that pre-empted an embargo on our knit shirts category while maximizing exports of this product group for this year.

"In 2004, the last year of the quota regime, the DTI-GTEB will monitor more closely the utilization and transfers of quotas among garment manufacturer-exporters. This is part of the final stage of our industry transformation plan which is a combination of business development and regulation.

"Allow us to add that while there are permanent quota holders, managing the quota is consulted with the industry focusing on maximizing utilization.

"Working with the private sector has successfully resulted in optimizing the use of quotas for 13 other critical product categories in the United States. We have effectively ensured full utilization of these 13 product categories without embargo.

"Finally, thank you once again for your vigilant concern. We in the government will continue to work with all industry stakeholders to improve the lives of our constituencies."

All right, so we have a new hero in the DTI! Still, how do we rate its successful result in improving the use of quotas for 13 other critical product categories to ensure the best use?

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ON that Monday, Dec. 29, I reported that millions of dollars worth of locally made jeans, which were shipped as early as November, were rotting in US customs warehouses.

To think that the poor locals timed their shipment near the end of the year precisely because the US buyers wanted the stocks for the Christmas season.

But the US customs imposed an embargo on the shipment because the Philippines exceeded its limit on the volume of jeans it could sell to the United States.

The United States is the world's most restrictive country when it comes to the entry of garments into its huge affluent market.

At the same time, however, to the rest of the world, particularly poor countries such as the Philippines, the United States is also pushing for unhampered free trade. Fair enough!

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AT times, anyway, the US government grants reprieve to countries like the Philippines, apparently for good behavior, such as in US foreign policy, i.e. geopolitics.

In 1998, for instance, this cute administration of Gloriaetta was able to get a higher quota on cotton pants, particularly denim jeans.

There was a good reason why the GTEB, which was then under Fe Agoncillo Reyes, sought the quota increase.

The GTEB knew that we could hardly compete with the cheap labor of other Asian countries like China and Vietnam.

We could only compete in the high-end items, such as the complicated "cargo pants," the kind our kids like to wear with the crotch somewhere around the knee.

***

AND the DTI was so proud of its record in managing the quota, as you can surmise from Aquino's letter, it only failed in the lone category in which we could still compete. Nice!

Two years ago, from what I gathered, the local garment industry was already egging, begging and bugging the DTI to work on a reprieve similar to the one in 1998.

That particular concession expired in 2002. In that same year, the industry was already asking the DTI to lobby in the United States for an extension.

Sure, the DTI said, and it went on to talk to its counterpart in the United States, which, of course, could not do anything on politically sensitive things like quota.

Sometimes government-to-government action is useless. Things like the quota increase should need a private sector lobby on both sides. It's a no-brainer even to FPJ, we hope.

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ANYWAY, the biggest complaint in the industry was not the money, although the losses from those embargoed jeans could be deadly to some companies.

Actually, it was the inaction of the DTI. Industry groups used to meet with the DTI at least once a month. And when they faced big issues like an impending embargo, they even had to meet every week.

Before this latest quota booboo of the DTI and the GTEB, or whichever of them will feel like owning the fault, they never even had a meeting for two months.

That was between September and November, which was the time that it became clear the country would exceed its limit on jeans, in which we were the most competitive.

There, that's the kind of management we are getting from our government. You know—too little, too late!

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 5, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco'de Oro Univ. Bank	17.75	18.5	17.75	18.5	458,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47.5	47	47.5	1,279,900
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	3,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38	42.5	38	38.5	1,895,900
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	10,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	28	28.5	28	28.5	724,700
Philippine National Bank	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	6,100
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	17.25	17.75	17.25	17.75	49,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26	26	8,700
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	5,000
First Abacus Financial	0.66	0.74	0.66	0.74	100,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1750	1765	1750	1765	170
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	1,000
Sun Life Financial Inc	1350	1395	1350	1395	4,450
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26	25	25	17,800
Diversified Fin. Network	2	2	2	2	10,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.71	460,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	870	910	870	910	90,790
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.045	0.047	0.045	0.046	6,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.041	0.04	0.041	4,200,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.91	0.9	0.9	8,580,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1000	1020	1000	1020	225,330
Ivantage Corp.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	30,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	9,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.25	15.5	15.25	15.5	108,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	25	24.5	25	2,826,700
Petron Corp.	2.26	2.34	2.26	2.34	4,855,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	50,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	150,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,566,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	350,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	15,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4	4	4	4	236,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31	31	31	500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.75	18.25	18.75	472,800
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	10,400
San Miguel Corp. B	63.5	64	63.5	64	119,900
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	5.2	5.4	5.2	5.4	6,604,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.49	0.49	1,370,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.175	0.17	0.175	150,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.25	60,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	19	19.25	19	19.25	651,200
Ionics Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.48	1.48	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	2,687,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	9,590,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	590,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	80,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.87	0.87	0.86	0.87	140,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	41,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,000,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.25	13.25	13	13	185,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.55	0.57	0.55	0.57	1,110,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	10,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	140,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	566,200
ATR Fin. Corp. - Warrants	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	50,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	800
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	10	10	10	10	100
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	2,952,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	510,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.125	0.13	0.125	0.13	320,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	650,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,639,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	100,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	101,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.8	11,880,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0038	0.0034	0.0038	38,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.235	0.23	0.235	1,560,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,550,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	62,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	3,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.43	330,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.45	650,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	1,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	500,000

10 projects for Spanish funding listed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Power Corp.'s Special Power Utilities Group has recommended at least 10 rural electrification projects for possible funding by the Spanish government under the Spanish-Philippines Protocol.

In a statement, Napocor said the move was made following the recent signing of a memorandum of agreement among the Department of Energy, Napocor and Spain's Expansión Exterior.

Exex is a state firm that specializes in providing consultancy and financial structuring of projects on behalf of Spanish export companies.

Under the MOU, Napocor would determine the needed generating capacity additions or projects eligible for funding under the Spanish program.

Of the projects identified so far, four are scheduled for implementation in 2005.

These include the 10-megawatt Mindoro wind farm project, the 5-MW Marinduque hybrid system project and two projects covering the Camotes Island diesel power plant in Cebu and 1 MW for the Ticao diesel power plant in Masbate.

For implementation in 2006 are the 5-MW Catanduanes and Masbate hybrid systems, 1-MW Romblon hybrid system and the 150-kilowatt Batan diesel power project in the Bicol region.

Lined up for 2006 are the expansion of the generating capacity of the Casiguran diesel-fired plant in Aurora by 1 MW and of the Agutaya plant in Palawan by 150 KW.

PNB to issue ₱2.2B worth of debt notes

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE National Bank, the country's sixth biggest lender, is set to issue up to P2.2 billion worth of peso-denominated subordinated notes as part of its capital-raising program.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, PNB said its board of directors had recently approved the issuance, which was part of the original $140 million in borrowings approved by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas last year.

PNB opted for a peso-denominated debt instrument to boost its tier 2 capital as foreign notes are currently expensive.

The first tranche of the peso issuance is scheduled to mature on January 2015.

American investment bank JP Morgan Securities Ltd. was appointed the sole arranger of the transaction while Multinational Investment Bancorporation was tapped as selling agent.

PNB had originally scheduled the issuance of $140 million worth of subordinated notes for the first quarter of this year.

The PNB said, however, that it might decide to issue more peso notes if the international bond market would remain unattractive.

The bank's tier-2 notes offering was designed to boost the bank's capital adequacy ratio (CAR), which stands at 14.1 percent on a consolidated basis.

BSP rules require banks to maintain a minimum CAR of 10 percent.

Airline industry up 8% in '04

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER months of suffering the ill effects of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that hit the industry hard last year, the aviation industry is seen to grow by 7-8 percent this year in terms of passenger volume.

The International Air Transport Association (Iata), an umbrella organization of airlines from all over the world, said in a statement that this growth would likely be led by airlines in the Asia-Pacific region.

The SARS outbreak earlier in the year left the airline industry reeling, particularly those in Asia-Pacific where the SARS incidence was at its highest.

Since May, airlines in the region had been the worst performers in the world.

However, airlines here in the region, including flag carrier Philippine Airlines Inc., have been steadily treading the recovery path these past months.

Passenger traffic for Asia-Pacific airlines declined by only 0.1 percent in October compared with the 1.6-percent drop registered in September, according to Iata data released last month.

For the first 10 months of 2003, Asia-Pacific passenger volume dropped by only 11.6 percent, better than the 13.1-percent decline registered in the January-to-September period.

Iata director general and chief executive Giovanni Bisignani said that 2003, although very difficult for the aviation industry, showed the resilience of international airlines.

GIHL asks gov't for tariff protection

By Michelle V. Remo

GLOBAL Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. (GIHL), a bidder for the assets of debt-ridden National Steel Corp., has requested the government for tariff protection to improve the viability of the steel firm.

Mela Bengzon, chief legal counsel of GIHL and managing partner of the Bengzon law firm, however, said that the request for tariff protection will not be a condition for GIHL to pursue its planned investment in the NSC.

"It will not be one of the make or break conditions of the company but it is an assistance we will be asking from the government together with the creditor-banks," she said.

Incoming Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima consulted local industry representatives last month on the prospect of granting the tariff protection to GIHL when the foreign steel firm takes over NSC, said a businessman who attended the meeting.

Reviving the tariffs on imported steel products will protect the NSC from competing with low-priced steel, and will likewise protect the investments of GIHL should it finally ink a deal with NSC creditor-banks and infuse money to revive the NSC.

Local industries, however, vehemently opposed the move, saying that bringing back tariffs on imported steel products will increase production costs and will make local steel firms uncompetitive.

Tariffs on imported raw steel products, such as billets and tinplates, currently stand at zero percent.

The Philippine Iron and Steel Institute (Pisi), the umbrella organization for the local steel industry, said in a letter to the Department of Trade and Industry that the government should just focus on giving the NSC investor tax breaks instead of tariff protection as a form of incentive.

Pisi said plans to give the NSC tariff protection pose a threat to the already viable businesses of existing steel manufacturers.

"NSC, by itself, is not the entire steel industry, but is just a mere part of it," Pisi said, adding there are 782 other steel manufacturing with an estimated 62,000 employees and P62.26 billion in investments.

Singapore asks RP . . .

From page B1

The CEPT-Afta provides for the lowering of the tariffs on petrochemical products to 5 percent in 2003.

The Philippines, however, set its tariffs on these products at 7 percent to 10 percent to give local industries more time to improve their competitiveness.

Singapore protested the move and threatened to retaliate by raising the tariffs on Philippine products.

During a meeting between Singapore and Philippine representatives last Dec. 18, Kabigting said, the Philippines was tasked to implement by May the tariff reduction equivalent to the amount owed to Singapore for 2003.

"We are considering a no-cash-out deal for the Philippines, and we are looking for products that are acceptable to both sides," said Kabigting, adding that the products that will likely have their tariffs reduced are those that are not locally produced to avoid affecting local industries.

Stocks surge 3.12% . . .

From page B1

shares in the bank within a certain threshold must offer to buy the shares held by the other minority shareholders at the same price.

BDO officials said there was no need to buy additional shares at the moment.

Banking sources said BDO would be effectively paying the SSS P70 to P80 per share for its stake in Equitable PCI, since part of the settlement would be in the form of long-term bonds that yield interests of at least 10 percent per year.

It was earlier disclosed that BDO would pay SSS about P43.50 per share for P14 billion for the entire block. *With a report from Reuters*

DISCLOSURES

FIRST Metro Investment Corp. disclosed the appointment of Menardo Jimenez as an additional member of the audit committee. Jaime Azurin was promoted as vice president for investment banking group while Jonathan Tabac was appointed assistant vice president, compliance officer and internal auditor.

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EDUARDO Borja resigned as vice president for fleet management division of **Lorenzo Shipping Corp.**

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FIL-Hispano Holdings Corp. declared a cash dividend of 35 centavos per share and a property dividend of one Fil-Hispano Corp. share for every FHHC share held in favor of stockholders of record as of Jan. 15.

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PAUL Wuthrich retired as administration division head of **Concrete Aggregates Corp.**

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CADP Group Corp. announced the appointment of Luis-Mari Zabaljauregui as vice president and resident manager of the company.

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THE NUMBER of **Nextstage Inc.**'s listed shares was reduced from over 268.2 million common shares to over 53.6 million following the company's quasi-reorganization.

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SPI Technologies Inc. bought 42,000 of its own shares at an average price of P13 each. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

My cheap holiday in Hong Kong

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

BEFORE I tell you about my first vacation in seven years, I would like to announce that I will be 74 tomorrow. I attribute my long life to the fact that I was born a long time ago. Already, I have received a telegram from the Queen asking me to remain here. I even got a call from the Pope from his Popemobile.

Unfortunately, I have reached the age where all the addresses in my diary are doctors, not women. I got married so late in life that Medicare paid for my honeymoon.

My wife and I are an ideal couple. She snores and I'm deaf. It is strange how we got married. We were sitting in a cinema and I said, "Are you fond of nuts?" She replied, "If that is a proposal. I accept." Anyway, we agreed to take our first holiday since the birth of our daughter.

I wanted to go to beautiful Singapore but she opted for an unbelievably cheap "no frills" holiday to Hong Kong. Only $75 for five days, four nights in a five-comet hotel in Guandong. It included collection to and from the airport, a half-day City Tour of Hong Kong and a day trip to Shenzhen. It sounded too good to be true and it was.

I thought we would take off from Naia, not Luneta. The pilot was swearing because he had mislaid his eyeglasses and could not see a thing without them. Luckily, the controls were in Braille. I had some doubts about his ability to fly so I asked for his ID. It said, "Pontius, pilot."

I was not expecting to go first class or even business class but neither did I expect to descend a flight of stairs into the cargo hold of a hot air balloon. There were 100 people down there plus lots of luggage and some goats. Just before take-off, the Irish stew asked us to fasten our scotch tape.

An hour into the flight she broke the bad news. The balloon was going to Beijing via Hong Kong but it was not landing there. The pilot would descend to 2,000 feet and circle the airport. Anyone who wished to purchase a parachute could do so for $100 but as it was optional, it was not included in the price.

All of us bought one except one lady who relied on her umbrella. She landed on top of a flagpole and the undertaker could not wipe the smile off her face.

I told Immigration that we had just dropped in and they looked at me as if I was an alien, which I am. We were searched intimately by guards of the opposite sex. It was so exciting that my wife insisted on being searched again. There were 98 complaints, not from the passengers, but from the massage parlors in Wanchai.

My wife embarrassed me filling in the entry form. It said SEX M or F She wrote W. When asked for an explanation, she said Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

We were met by a guide who did not speak English or *Waray* and we were whisked to Kowloon by bus. The hotel was so big that if you dialed Reception, you were charged for a long distance call. It was so high class that you could not enter the sauna without coat and tie.

Security was fantastic. Even Room Service was unlisted. I asked for a room with a bath. Too bad they were in separate buildings. But I had no complaint about the elevator service. It stopped in the middle of our room.

I expected breakfast in the hotel but they gave us coupons to be used at McDonald's. Not the nearest one but the one in the New Territories.

I never eat breakfast, as I don't like eating on an empty stomach. Luckily, we found a restaurant which said, "All you can eat for HK$20" (about P140). This seemed a bargain until I discovered that they only gave you one chopstick and you were not allowed to share.

We went to the Bank of America to change our dollars but because of the weak dollar and strong Euro and Yen, we found a notice outside which read,

"Money speaks all languages,
A fact you can determine.
But nowadays, it only speaks
In Japanese and German."

When I asked for the exchange rate for the peso, all the money-changers went into hysterics. "We only use them to play Mah Jong," they said, "cheaper than Monopoly money."

Because of the confirmed case of SARS in Guandong, business was terrible. I saw a shoplifter returning goods to a store and the hotel started stealing towels from the guests. It was colder in Hong Kong and my wife developed sinus trouble. Sign us a check for this, sign us a check for that.

I took her into a drug store where they sell a birth control pill called No Kidding and Viagra under its chemical name, mycoxafloppin. She went window-shopping and bought five windows. She spent five hours in one store, stuck in the revolving door.

We eventually had dinner on the Floating Restaurant but the menu was in Chinese so I was all at sea. Actually, I am a good linguist. I speak good French, fair German and Great Britain. English has nearly 100,000 words whereas Chinese has only 15,000. But it is still difficult to learn because none of them are English.

A very funny incident occurred on the boat. There were about 300 passengers and scores of waiters running around wearing masks. Unfortunately, I got a piece of beef stuck in my throat and began to choke. I coughed violently for about a minute and when I looked up, all the passengers and even the crew had jumped overboard. Fortunately, most were rescued.

I took my family to Ocean Park where we saw the dolphins and two pandas. One of them escaped causing pandamonium. We took the tram up to the Peak and I am writing this article in a restaurant at the top. Who would have thought that at 74, I would still be at my peak. The trip to Shenzhen was a day to remimbi. I hope you got that yuan.

One evening, we took our daughter to the circus where they fired a man from a cannon. As he came from Northern China, he was billed as the HUNAN CANNONBALL. Then there was this episode on the ferry but it is ferry long and I have run out of space.

Returning from China, we had to have our temperature taken. Normally, they use a digital thermometer, which they click near your forehead but they were useless, because someone had forgotten to bring batteries. So they had to use rectal thermometers instead. Our tour guide, Ben Dover, was most apologetic but it caused long delays and lots of embarrassment.

Although I like to amuse you, I am supposed to write about the stock market so for the next two weeks, I will rewrite my 10 commandments, updated and revised. This will probably be the most useful guide to investment that you will read.

It is based on 52 years experience and I guarantee that, if you follow it, your investment decisions will benefit enormously. I want to be remembered for my contribution to technical analysis, not for my jokes, so it will be joke-free.

Please note my new email address. It is bearbull2010@yahoo.com. I updated my computer to Windows 6.0 and my hotmail disappeared. Does anyone know how to fix it?

Fed official says US recovery sustainable

WASHINGTON—Federal Reserve Governor Ben Bernanke said on Sunday that there was less fear than earlier that a lasting US economic recovery was not in place, but he noted there was considerable ground to be made up.

In response to questions after addressing the American Economic Association in San Diego, Bernanke noted particularly that labor markets had a lot of slack after losing millions of jobs in recent years.

"The fear about growth not being sustainable obviously is diminishing," Bernanke said, and businesses seem to be joining the faster pace of activity.

"One of the factors that I was concerned about earlier on was whether or not the capital spending upsurge would be sustainable," he said, adding: "It now appears to be much stronger than it might have been at some stage."

It is unclear what rate of economic growth was needed to generate job growth.

"There is still some risk that 4 percent growth might not be sufficient to put us on a safe path in that respect and that's why I think accommodative policy is appropriate," Bernanke said, referring to the US central bank's current stance of low interest rates.

On other topics, he said it was possible that inflation might pick up, but said it was preferable for Fed policymakers to follow an interest-rate course that bolsters recovery chances rather than take a chance on not doing so.

"It's very possible ... that inflation will pick up a little bit," Bernanke said, "So it's a risk."

Reuters

Japanese economy emerging from slowdown—Koizumi

JAPAN'S Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi REUTERS

TOKYO—Japan's prime minister said Monday that the nation's economy is finally emerging from a prolonged slowdown thanks to rising corporate profits, investment and write-offs of bad bank loans.

"Japan's economy has strong underlying strength. It has potential energy," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said in a nationally televised New Year's press conference. "Finally, we are starting to see some bright signs."

Koizumi said Japan's economy has been performing above government expectations as banks have reduced bad loans and rising profits give companies more money to invest.

He acknowledged that Japan's employment situation remains tough with unemployment at 5.2 percent—just below a record high—but noted that job offers are increasing.

Japan's economy has been struggling for more than a decade since the country's asset "bubble"—inflated by speculative spending on stocks and real estate—burst in the early 1990s.

But the economy has recently started to recover and analysts expect a continued rebound this year on the back of strong exports to the United States, as well as the rest of Asia.

The prime minister reiterated his commitment to economic reforms such as privatizing postal services and scaling back public spending.

Critics say he has stalled on promised reforms because of opposition from the old guard in his governing party.

"The strategy of structural reforms is now gaining momentum," he told reporters. "The seeds we have sowed on reforms are starting to sprout. I'd like to continue pushing reforms without letting up so the saplings will grow into a big tree."

Japan relied on public works spending to boost growth for decades, but the nation's public debt is ballooning and Koizumi has been trying to slash such spending.

The government is forecasting moderate growth of 1.8 percent in fiscal 2004, which starts in April, due to strengthening demand at home and abroad.

Many Japanese companies have cut costs to improve profitability.

Analysts have predicted the Tokyo stock market will remain bullish after staging a rebound from 20-year lows last year. Stocks began the trading year on a high note, closing higher with solid gains by export-related issues Monday.

The benchmark Nikkei Stock Average closed up 1.39 percent in a half-day trading session.

Surveys by three major newspapers published Sunday showed that Japanese companies are optimistic about their prospects in 2004, reflecting a turnaround in business confidence as the economy slowly recovers. *AP*

Gov't urged to take major stake in LG

SEOUL—Creditors of South Korea's LG Card Co. urged the government on Monday to take a majority stake in the ailing credit card company after one bank said it would veto a proposed $4.2 billion rescue by LG's lenders.

The firm's 16 lenders have failed to agree on a package to save the country's largest credit card company from bankruptcy even though Finance Minister Kim Jin-pyo had said he expected a deal to be thrashed out by Monday.

Sparked by fresh solvency worries, shares in LG Card fell to a record low as the firm faced $418.4 million in maturing debt.

LG Card is the biggest casualty of a credit boom that has left one in 10 South Koreans above the age of 15 unable to repay debt.

Creditors want state-run Korea Development Bank to inject more money into LG Card by taking a bigger stake than the 19 percent it has proposed, the financial markets regulator said.

"Creditors are talking about KDB shouldering more costs than suggested by owning a majority stake in LG Card," Yun Yong-ro, director general of the regulatory Financial Supervisory Commission, told Reuters. *Reuters*

MONEY traders are busy trading under the foreign exchange board quoting 106.88 yen against the US dollar during the morning session at the Tokyo foreign exchange market. The euro reached a new historical high in Tokyo as participants returned from the New Year holiday break, while the dollar continued to ease against major currencies on concerns about the US current account deficit, the US dollar was trading at 106.88 yen at the Tokyo market. AFP

Toyota seeks US expansion with hybrids

DETROIT—Toyota Motor Corp. would be forgiven if it paused to celebrate its achievements in the United States during 2003: an eighth straight year of record sales, the title of best-selling car marque for the first time, and a stellar launch of the youth-oriented Scion brand.

Instead, the world's third-biggest auto maker is already talking about surpassing the record sales figure this year and next, stating two main reasons: hybrids and pickup trucks.

"We are downright optimistic about the future," Jim Press, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Toyota's US sales arm, told a news conference at the North American auto show in Detroit on Sunday.

Toyota's US market share is at an all-time high—11.7 percent in November, the latest month for which figures are available—and within reach of DaimlerChrysler's local Chrysler arm, which had 12.5 percent.

Toyota expects an even better year ahead, not only because it predicts that a stronger economy would help overall industry sales grow slightly to about 17 million units, but mostly thanks to a more robust line-up for its own brands. *Reuters*

Dollar hits new low vs euro; gold prices highest in 14 yrs

SINGAPORE—The dollar sank to a record low against the euro on Monday, driven by persistent fears over the widening US current account deficit, sending gold prices to their highest in nearly 14 years.

But suspected yen-selling intervention by the Bank of Japan helped the dollar jump against the yen with the US currency touching a session high of around 107.35 yen after falling to around 106.75, near its three-year low.

The euro hit a record peak of $1.2672 before retreating. Dealers said a defense of low US interest rates from a top Federal Reserve official added pressure on the dollar.

Tokyo stocks opened trade for the new year up more than one percent, catching up on the gains made in global stocks while Japan was on holiday. The gains were led by exporters such as Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., and banks.

Shares in troubled LG Card fell their daily 15 percent limit after South Korea's biggest card issuer said it could run out of money again if lenders failed to agree an immediate $4.2 billion rescue plan, despite reassuring comments from the finance minister.

Other Asian share markets were mixed with the MSCI index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan up 0.4 percent. The index jumped 44 percent last year.

The dollar was earlier hit by a rise in Tokyo share prices.

The Nikkei average rose 1.4 percent at 10,825.17 in a shortened half-day session.

Electronics giant Sony Corp. rose 1.9 percent while Matsushita, the maker of Panasonic brand goods, and Canon Inc., gained around one percent.

"The current recovery is often dubbed as one led by digital goods. This will be maintained this year as well, with their sales and earnings seen expanding," said Masaki Iso, chief investment officer at Yasuda Asset Management.

South Korean stocks dipped 0.1 percent on worries over the problems at LG Card, which also sent shares of Shinhan Financial Group, the parent of Shinhan Bank—an LG creditor—down over 2 percent.

Australian shares shed 0.4 percent pressured by Santos Ltd.

The oil and gas producer fell more than 4 percent after it said a fire at its South Australian gas plant would cut its net profit by A$25 million.

Spot gold hit $418.00 an ounce for the first time since February 1990 as the strong euro made the precious metal a better bargain for Europeans.

Reuters

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CORPORATE OFFICE

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CAPACITY BUILDING OF MWSS

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) is planning to enhance its financial management system and upgrade capabilities of its in-house financial staff, which aims to increase productivity and strengthen governance.

In particular, the Project, through the use of modern information technology is intended to (i) improve management and financial accounting, corporate planning, budgeting & budgetary control, internal control & audit systems, and data processing; (ii) improve skills on strategic corporate planning; and (iii) provide technical mechanisms and training to boost staff productivity.

The consultancy services needed shall cover, but not limited to, the following:

1) Study, Enhancement/Updating and/or Modifications of the Existing Financial Management System and Internal Control Mechanism;
2) Design Corporate Planning;
3) Develop Manuals and Policy Guidelines;
4) Conduct training program on financial management after the completion of the study/review to ensure incorporation of the results in the training content;
5) System Development/Upgrading through computerization and/or application of latest technologies; and
6) Develop a transition mechanism in case there is a need to implement a new system.

MWSS therefore is inviting Local consulting firms to submit their request for pre-qualification together with their company profile and organizational structure, which will provide information regarding their field of expertise and specialization, and the experiences of key personnel who will be assigned to undertake the required consultancy services. On the basis of the submissions, MWSS will shortlist the consultancy firms.

Interested parties may secure the pre-qualification statement/forms and submit the same in five (5) sets including 1-set original copy on or before 5:00 P.M. of January 30, 2004 to the Office address stated hereunder. Reference time will be the bundy clock located at the same office. Late submission will not be accepted.

Engineering and Project Management Department
Ground Floor, Engineering Building
Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City, Philippines
Telefax No. (632) 9222568

(Sgd.) MACRA A. CRUZ
Acting Administrator

(PDI – January 6, 12 & 16, 2004)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) NPC, PDPP, Dingle, Iloilo invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

Date/Time & Place of Bidding	Item Description	PR No./Inquiry No.	Approved Agency Estimate
Jan. 22, 2004 2.00 pm NPC, PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo City Pre-Bidding Conference will be on January 7, 2004 at exactly 2.00 pm at the PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo.	JOB ORDER Provide labor, tools, materials, equipment and other necessary items needed in the construction of proposed warehouse for 32 MW barges at West Area Complex, Bo. Obrero, Iloilo City.	PB104-2003-204	Php 1,029,621.00
Jan. 22, 2004 2:00 pm NPC, PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo	JOB ORDER Provide labor, materials, tools, equipment and and technical supervision for repair of T/C rotorshaft assembly for Niagata T/C Model NA. 445/450.	PB104-2003-154	Php 450,000.00

A Two Envelope Mode of Procurement shall be observed.

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Section, Administrative and Finance Division, PDPP, Dingle, Iloilo with telephone number 351-0450 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Php 500.00 starting December 23, 2003 for PR No. PB104-2003-204 and Php 150.00 for PR No. PB104-2003-154. No bid documents will be issued on or after January 14, 2004.

Bid documents shall be received on the following dates and place, viz:
1st Envelope (technical documents) — January 14, 2004 PDPP Conference Room
2nd Envelope (financial docs.) — January 22, 2004 PDPP Conference Room

Bid proposals and other tender documents shall be opened in the presence of the prospective bidders.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with IRR of R.A. 9184. Pass/Fail evaluation shall be observed.

A bidders Bond equivalent to 2.5% is required in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, GSIS surety bond.

A Performance Bond equivalent to 5% of the total contract amount, penal and callable on demand issued by the GSIS.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

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MARA PAWNSHOP BR of 2230 M. Roxas St. Sta Ana Manila Auction Sale on JAN. 12, 2004 Mon.. at 2.30 in the afternoon. Respectively, Aug. 10-Sept. 12, 2003. SONS of J. LANUZA, Auctioneer.
(PDI-January 06. 2004)

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

MARA PAWNSHOP I, II, III, IV and Comembo Br. of Makati City. AUCTION SALE on Jan. 12. 2004 Mon. at 10:30, 11:30, 12:30, 1:30 and 8:30 in the morning and on the afternoon, Respectively, Aug. 10 - Sept. 12, 2003. SONS OF J. LANUZA, Auctioneer.
(PDI-January 06, 2004)

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City

FISHERIES ADMINISTRATIVE)
ORDER NO. 223 :
Series of 2003)

SUBJECT : Moratorium on the Issuance of new Commercial Fishing Vessel and Gear License (CFVGL) as part of a precautionary approach to fisheries management

WHEREAS, Article 192 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was ratified by our country in 1984 and which entered into force in 1994, binds the Philippine government to protect and preserve the marine environment;

WHEREAS, Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Article 6.5 of the Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and other international fisheries instruments prescribe a precautionary approach in the utilization and management of living aquatic resources;

WHEREAS, Article 7.1.8 of the CCRF urges States to take measures to prevent or eliminate overfishing and excess fishing capacity and to ensure that levels of fishing effort are commensurate with the sustainable use of fishery resources;

WHEREAS, the International Plan of Action (IPOA) for the Management of Fishing Capacity recommends that States should make a preliminary assessment and monitoring of fishing capacity and develop appropriate records of fishing vessels;

WHEREAS, the IPOA to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU fishing) recommends that States should maintain a record of fishing vessels entitled to fly its flag and should ensure that these do not engage in or support IUU fishing;

WHEREAS, Section 7 of Republic Act 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 mandates the Department of Agriculture (DA) to issue such number of licenses and permits for the conduct of fishery activities subject to the limits of the Maximum Sustainable Yield of the resource as determined by scientific studies or best available evidence;

WHEREAS, Section 107 of RA 8550 authorizes the DA to issue regulations for the conservation, preservation, management and sustainable development of fishery and aquatic resources;

WHEREFORE, in view of these premises, this guideline temporarily suspending the issuance of new CFVGL intended to facilitate an inventory of licensed and unlicensed commercial fishing vessels and gears is hereby issued for the information and guidance of all concerned.

Section 1. Registration for Inventory. – Prior to the one-year moratorium, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the DA shall first register for inventory all Philippine commercial fishing vessels and gears and shall issue new or renew licenses during a six-month period from ***January 21, 2004 to July 21, 2004***, inclusive under the following conditions:

a. All owners/operators shall register their commercial fishing vessels and gears, whether or not licensed by the BFAR and whether or not registered by the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), with the BFAR or its regional offices having jurisdiction where the owner/operator is holding office. No fee whatsoever shall be charged for such registration and the forms to be used for the purpose;

b. Holders of licenses expiring from ***July 22, 2004 to July 22, 2005***, shall cause the same to be registered and licensed. Holders of licenses expiring beyond ***July 22, 2005***, need only to register for inventory their commercial fishing vessels and gears;

c. Owners/operators must have their unlicensed commercial fishing vessels and gears registered for inventory preparatory to their licensing during the period. To be submitted are proof that they have been fishing regularly including documentation on the construction or acquisition of the boat and gear, entries in the course of business, fishing logbooks, document on transactions involving catch, among others, including vessel registration issued by MARINA. Those who will cooperate in this exercise are assured that their cooperation will not constitute confession of any wrongdoing and will not result in legal action against them.

Section 2. Moratorium on the Issuance of New Licenses. – In order to maintain the current level of fishing effort in Philippine waters during the inventory process and to facilitate the establishment of a computerized commercial fishing vessel and gear register, a one-year moratorium on the issuance of new licenses will be put into effect from ***July 22, 2004 to July 22, 2005***, which will apply to the following transactions:

a. No new commercial fishing licenses will be issued;
b. No new gear or gear types will be licensed;
c. Vessels sold or alienated within the period of suspension will not be licensed, except for vessels that have been registered for inventory, which can be licensed during the period of suspension;
d. No clearances for importation of fishing vessels will be issued; and,
e. Suspension of the implementation of relevant provisions of Fisheries Administrative Order No. 198, except Sections 16-18 and Sections 22-32 thereof.

Section 3. Exception to the One-Year Moratorium – The following are not covered by the one-year suspension;

a. Fishing vessels operating in distant or international waters or waters of other countries which allow such fishing operations and those that maybe imported for distant-water fishing will be issued international fishing permits during the period of suspension;
b. Fishing vessels that are sold or alienated during the period of suspension, provided these were registered for inventory during the six-month registration period;
c. Replacement of fishing vessels which are lost or destroyed during the period of suspension, provided these were registered for inventory during the six-month registration period; and
d. New applications for long line fishing vessels.

Section 4. Administrative Sanctions. – Non-participation in the inventory process shall be a ground for:

a. the cancellation of existing licenses;
b. non-inclusion in the national fishing vessel register to be submitted to the relevant regional fisheries management organizations in compliance with international conventions; and,
c. exclusion from the fishery should new access rules be imposed in the future.

Section 5. Effectivity. – This order shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette and/or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation and upon registration with the National Administrative Register.

ISSUED this 29th day of December, 2003, at Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila, Philippines.

(Sgd.) LUIS P. LORENZO, JR.
Secretary

Recommending approval:

(Sgd.) MALCOLM I. SARMIENTO, JR.
BFAR National Director

(Sgd.) CESAR M. DRILON, JR.
Undersecretary

(PDI – January 6, 2004)

CAGAYAN II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Aparri, Cagayan

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The Cagayan II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CAGELCO II) is inviting all interested bidders to pre-qualify and to bid for the following materials and equipment:

Wood & Concrete Poles, Wires, Transformers and line Materials

To be qualified, bidder must have fully complied with the following:

1. Accreditation requirements: (for submission to PBAC Chairman, Mrs. Blandina Y. Madamba)
   - a) Company Profile
   - b) Business Registration
   - c) Business Permit
   - d) BIR/VAT Certificate
   - e) Latest Income Tax Return (ITR)
   - f) List of Clients for a period of 3 years, if applicable
2. Must be able to pay P2,000.00 (for this particular bidding only and not refundable) for the bid documents during the pre-bidding conference.

CAGELCO II reserves the right to reject any/or all bid without any reason; waive any formality therein, accept proposal most advantageous to the cooperative and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidder for expenses or, losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Pre-bid conference and bidding schedules shall be informed to all qualified bidders through fax and mails.

Deadline of submission of requirements – January 21, 2004

(Sgd.) GABRIEL A. TORDESILLAS
General Manager

Note: For the extension of laterals lines for the following areas.
1. Silagan, Allacapan, Cagayan
2. Tamalunog, Flora Apayao
3. Zimay, Paddaya, Aparri
4. Zone 4, 5 & 6, Callao, Gonzaga

Source of fund: 2002 National Electrification Administration (NEA) Subsidy
(PDI – January 6 & 13, 2004)

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RAFAELA ANTONIO DE LEON

*Peacefully joined her Creator
on January 5, 2004 at the age of 82.*

Her late husband **Cesareo, Jr.** (†); children **Cesareo, III** and **Judith Arteche, Marilyn** and **Simplicio Reyes, Froilan** and **Josefina Velarde, Jose Ma.** and **Rebecca Juarez**; grandchildren, in-laws, relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will lie in state at the following:

Capilla de San Francisco, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City on January 5 and 6, 2004.

Garden of Memories Memorial Chapel, Calzadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila in the morning of January 7 up to January 8, 2004.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 8, 2004 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the Garden of Memories Memorial Park, Calzadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

SERVILLANA "MILING" BUNDA GANALON

December 29, 2003

Rebecca (†) & Glicerio (†) De Los Reyes
Ester & Ceferino L. Follosco
Lilia & Alfonso Andaya
Milagros & Paulino Pagsuyuin
Severino, Jr. & Lilia Ganalon
Zeneida (†) & Rudolph M. Reyes (†)
Myrna & Federico B. Blay, Jr.

**The De La Salle University
Board of Trustees**

are sad to announce the death of

Br. J. Benedict FSC,

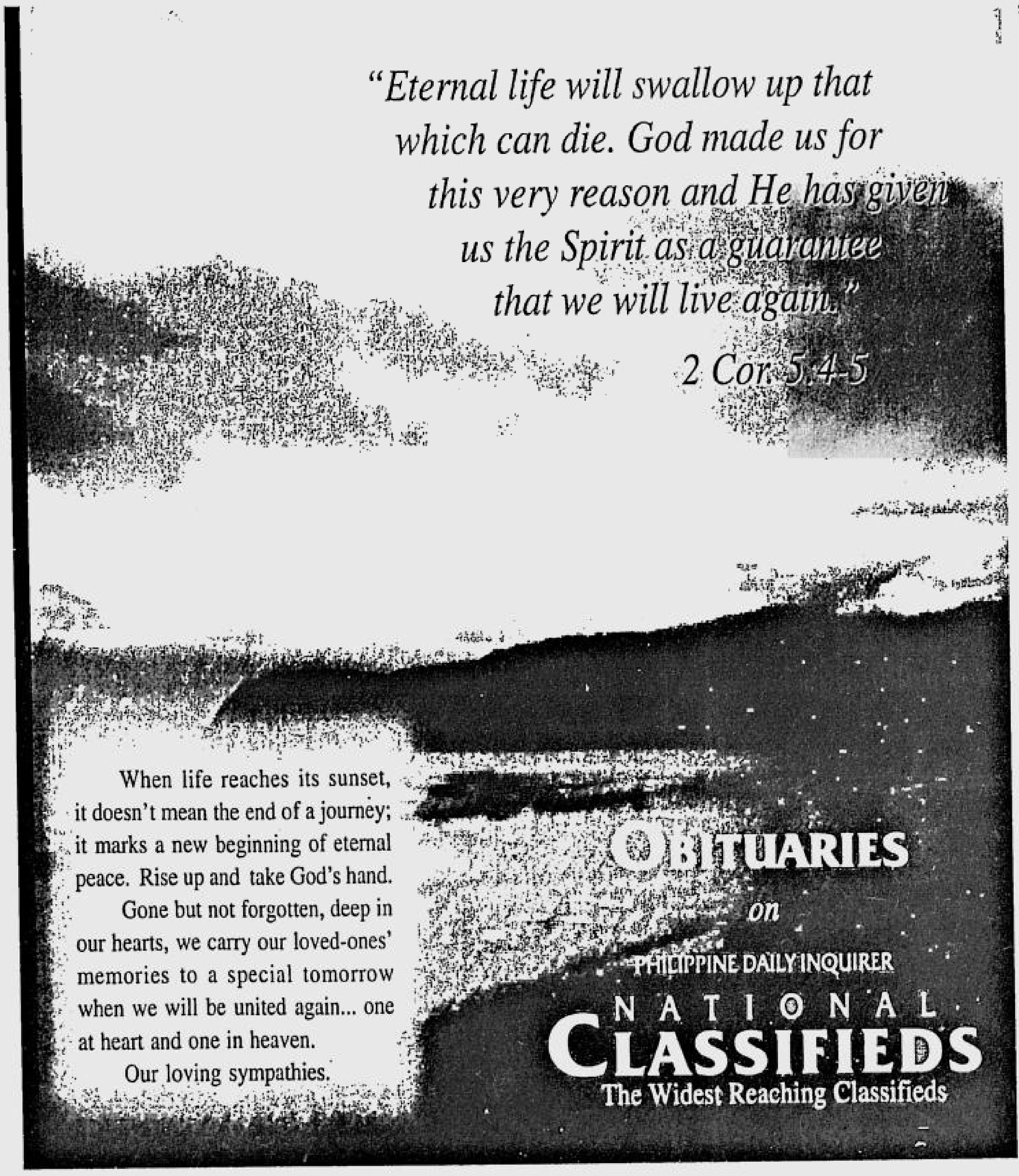
Vice-President Emeritus for System
Development and Alumni Affairs,
De La Salle University, on January 3

His remains lie in state at the Most Blessed Sacrament Chapel at Taft Avenue.

There will be a Mass of the Resurrection on the evening of Tuesday, January 6 at 6:00 p.m. and on January 7, 8:00 a.m. at the De La Salle Main Chapel, Taft Avenue.

The burial will take place at the Brothers' cemetery in the Novitiate of Lipa, Batangas on Wednesday, January 7 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

Please omit flowers. Instead, donations to the De La Salle University Science Foundation Legacy Fund will be welcomed.



*"Eternal life will swallow up that
which can die. God made us for
this very reason and He has given
us the Spirit as a guarantee
that we will live again."*
2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset,
it doesn't mean the end of a journey;
it marks a new beginning of eternal
peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in
our hearts, we carry our loved-ones'
memories to a special tomorrow
when we will be united again... one
at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.

---

*"I am the Resurrection and the Life.
He who believes in Me will live
even though he dies, and whoever
believes in Me will never die."*
John 11:25-26

Our Dearly Beloved

BEN-HUR C. SALCEDO

Born: March 13, 1938
Died: December 30, 2003

Peacefully joined his Creator at the age of 65.

His beloved wife **Eva Llacer Salcedo**; daughters **Mary Agnes, Eva Marie, Mary Anne**; sons **Ben-Hur Jr., Ben-Hur Noel & Ben-Hur Victor**; brother **Nelson**; sisters **Araceli, Shirley** (†), **Merle**; grandchildren, friends and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Park, Chapels 1 & 2, Marikina City.

Interment will be on Wednesday,
January 7, 2004 at the Loyola
Memorial Park, Marikina City at 12 noon.

AMALIA SALANGUIT-GALLARDO

(November 14, 1914 – January 2, 2004)
of Nasugbu, Batangas and Sacramento, California

*Has peacefully joined her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on
January 2, 2004.*

She is the widow of the late **Judge Pedro Gallardo**. She is survived by her children **Joselito and Marietta Gallardo, Janette and Eugenio Ealdama, Jessica and Darley Wijesekara, Cynthia Roces, Jess and Elaine Gallardo, Tito and Lani Gallardo, Joy and Cedric Panis**, thirty-one grandchildren and twenty-two great-grandchildren.

**"For God so loved the world,
that He gave us His only
begotten Son, that
whoever believes in Him
shall not perish but have
everlasting life."**

John 3:16

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Touch Mobile's 'Daddy' bags award from CMMA

SINCE its launch in September 2001, Touch Mobile has successfully established its position as the GSM brand that caters to the needs of the Filipino family.

Its primary goal of bringing Filipino families together and keeping them connected at all times has won creative honors for the brand.

In the recently concluded 25th Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA) held at the Henry Lee Irwin Theater of the Ateneo de Manila University, Touch Mobile's television commercial entitled "Daddy" was named as the Best Branded TV Ad of the Year.

This 30-seconder dramatic spot, showing the father leaving his wife and daughter behind in their hometown in Lingayen, Pangasinan to work in Quezon City, has undoubtedly touched the hearts of every Filipino family. In an effort to make the impact of separation lighter for his child, the father calls her up three times during his long travel through his Touch Mobile phone, sends her a touching icon, and finally a text message to profess his love for her.

The CMMA, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Manila, rewards and pays tribute to media products that enhance the total human development of the Filipino audience through competent and professional use of mass media techniques.

The awards are given every year to promote the basic human values - love of God, love for truth, respect for the natural environment, promotion of positive Filipino values, and love for life.

Two years since its launch, Touch Mobile has become one of the country's largest GSM brands and the leading value brand among the new subscribers coming into the market.

It has introduced revolutionary value-added services specifically designed for the Filipino family such as the Family AutoLoad, Home Info, Multimedia Messaging, and Overseas AutoLoad.

JESUIT VOLUNTEERS ACCEPTS DONATIONS THROUGH REMITCARD

The Jesuit Volunteers Philippines Foundation can now accept donations through RemitCard, a unique remittance card that allows you to transfer money through text. RemitCard now allows Jesuit Volunteers and those who support the organization to 'text' their donation via their cellphones. The agreement between the two organizations was recently celebrated by (from left) Ma. Theresa Quijano, program officer for volunteer service, JVP; Mark Lopez, executive director, JVP; Philip Camara, president, RemitCard Inc; and Olyn Panlilio, general manager, RemitCard.

YEHEY!, CCP INTRODUCE CHANNEL FOR PURCHASING TICKETS

Top Philippine Internet portal and online community Yehey! and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) have partnered to offer an online channel for the convenient distribution of tickets to CCP presentations. The channel, called Yehey!Culture, is a sub-portal of the Yehey! site dedicated solely to CCP events and offerings. Users may purchase tickets online at www.yehey.com/culture 24x7 using their ATM cards via PayPlus+, a proprietary web-based payment gateway developed by Yehey! for secure online purchasing. Photo shows (clockwise): Joel Hilario, CCP management information system head; Jason Banico, Yehey! chief technology officer; Dennis Marasigan, CCP marketing manager; Adolfo Suzara, Yehey! director; Kevin Khoe, Yehey! chief operating officer; Nestor Jardin, CCP president; and William Chua, iVantage chair and Yehey! director.

BayanTrade appoints new officers

BAYANTRADE, which provides sourcing and procurement services in the Philippines and Asia Pacific, recently appointed five new officers for its finance, human resources, marketing and accounts management departments.

Rodel Manansala was named director for finance and administration. He brings with him over 15 years' experience leading the finance teams of top local and multinational corporations with operations in Asia. Manansala was previously regional finance controller of a German engineering firm, and finance director of one of the Philippines' largest media networks.

Appointed head of human capital management, Amelia Alde has 12 years of relevant experience in human resources, personnel and administration functions. A former human resource manager of a global technology solutions provider, Alde has also worked for one of the leaders in the finance and human resource software industry, where she was responsible for the overall direction and control of the company's human resource services.

Melanie Gaite was named head for marketing and customer relationship management. With a bachelor's degree from the University of the Philippines and MBA units from De La Salle University, Gaite has over 12 years combined experience in marketing, business development, sales, quality and customer service management in telecommunications, information technology and hotel industries. Prior to joining BayanTrade, she was senior manager for marketing and alliance partnership of a full-service telecommunications provider.

BayanTrade further beefed up its strategic business units with the addition of Isagani Ong who was named manager for the semicon, electronics and information and communications technology sectors; and Helena Estrella Alonso, senior accounts officer for the pharmaceutical, banking, logistics and transport industries. Both will be tasked to support buying organizations with their sourcing and procurement requirements through enhancing process efficiencies and generating cost savings.

Ong previously worked as purchasing manager of a global, top 30 electronics company. He has a total of 10 years combined experience in semiconductor assembly, process engineering, purchasing and logistics. Alonso, on the other hand, brings with her over seven year of marketing, accounts and business management experience from the information and communications technology sector.

TEACHER RECIEVES TRIP TO FRANCE FROM PHILIPS

Philips Consumer Electronics, Europe's number 1 consumer electronics company, recently awarded one of the grand prize winners of its 'Best of Europe' promo. Arnaldo Gutierrez, a faculty member of the Holy Angel University's College of Engineering in Angeles, Pampanga, received a free trip for two to France from Philips. The exciting vacation package includes roundtrip airfare, hotel accommodation, breakfast, sightseeing tours and transfers. Gutierrez expressed surprise and delight at having won the prize, a perfect vacation for him and his wife Cynthia. Photo shows (from left) Arnaldo and Cynthia Gutierrez with Philips Consumer Electronics general manager Angelo Valenton.

ProductFILES

Jack n' Jill Piattos Roadhouse BBQ

SURPRISE your taste buds with a new flavor combination from Jack n' Jill Piattos. Get a distinctively different and flavorful snack with the new Jack n' Jill Piattos Roadhouse BBQ. It has the light, crunchy taste with the ultra-thin texture and crispness of Jack n' Jill Piattos combined with a distinctive flavor of perfectly blended Roadhouse Beef Barbecue sauce that will surely delight you as it starts out sweet and goes down spicy. The new Jack n' Jill Piattos Roadhouse BBQ is available in two handy sizes, buddy and family packs, to suit your different snacking needs. So go ahead and take time out from your busy schedule. With the new Jack n' Jill Piattos Roadhouse BBQ, downtime pleasures will make you feel like "you've never had this good."

DOMINIC OCHOA VISITS THUMBS-UP SM BICUTAN

Young actor Dominic Ochoa visited one of the Thumbs-Up Stalls in SM Bicutan. Thumbs-Up offers a unique kind of ice cream experience: a 'palette' of five different ice cream flavors that can be enjoyed for only P25 in the world's smallest cones. Other branches of Thumbs-Up are in SM City Fairview, SM City Sta. Mesa, Ever Ortigas, Shoppesville Plus Greenhills, SM City North Edsa and soon at Glorietta, Alabang Town Center, SM City Manila, SM City Lucena, SM City Pampanga, Gaisano Mall Davao, Derdee Pops Supermarket National Highway Gen. Santos and many more. Dominic acts as the vice president for marketing for Thumbs-Up. For franchise inquiries, call 687-3436.

HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION
GUARANTY AND CREDIT INSURANCE GROUP

INVITATION TO BID

The HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION (HGC) hereby invites offers to purchase by way of cash sealed bids on the following property/ies located at the Manila Harbour Centre, Radial Rd. 10, Vitas, Tondo, Manila.

A. INDUSTRIAL LOTS

ITEM NO.	BLOCK NO.	LOT AREA	LOT AREA (sqm.)	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	2	6	5,000 00	105,000,000 00
2	2	7	5,000 00	105,000,000 00
3	4	10	10,000 00	205,000,000 00

B. COMMERCIAL LOTS

4	6	30	257 89	5,544,635 00
5	16	2	2,458 40	55,314,000 00
6	16	3	2,455 40	55,246,500 00
7	17	4	3,319 70	73,033,400 00
8	18	8	419 48	9,018,820 00
9	18	9	419 48	9,018,820 00
10	18	10	419 48	9,018,820.00
11	19	10	373 37	8,027,455 00
12	19	13	373 37	8,027,455 00
13	19	14	373 37	8,027,455 00

A bidder's bond equivalent to ten (10%) percent of the total bid price in the form of cash or certified manager's/cashier's check-payable to HGC will be required of all prospective bidders.

The bidder is advised to inspect the property/ies subject of public bidding to see for himself its/their actual condition. All properties are being sold on "as is" basis. Particulars may be obtained from the Cashflow Guaranty Dept. / Developmental Guaranty Dept. at the 4th Flr., Jade Bldg., 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City or call 897-3310 or 897-3488.

Sealed bids must be received on or before 2 00 p.m. on January 15, 2004 at the HGC Head Office Ground Flr., Jade Bldg., 335 Sen. Gil Puyat AVe., Makati City.

THE CORPORATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL OFFER, TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFERS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CORPORATION.

(Sgd.) **RAFAEL P. DELOS SANTOS**
Chairman
Bids and Award Committee

(PDI – January 6, 7 & 8, 2004)

Clips

Instant meals from 'Lasap'

ON TOP of everyone's New Year's list is the resolve to try out new things which will make life easier. When it comes to cooking, instant meals should be the solution for mothers and cooks. Now, it won't take much preparation time to whip up a delicious meal for your family. Instant seasoning mix products such as "Lasap" are excellent time-savers and delectable treats for all families. Each mix contains all the seasoning you need to create a desired dish, minus all the time and fussing in the kitchen which requires hours that could have been spent on much important things like office work or bonding with the family. The secret is out, and it is found in every pack of Lasap instant seasoning mix. For inquiries, call 712-5404, 741-2141.

BMA sales training seminars

AS A year-starter, Businessmaker Academy (BMA), offers a series of short one-day sales training seminars to help companies motivate and improve their sales force. The sales training courses include: Effective Sales Communications Techniques (Jan. 15) - "Communicate Well, Succeed in Sales"; Oral Presentation Techniques for Business (Jan. 16) - "Create and Deliver Spectacular Presentations"; Effective Sales Probing and Negotiation Techniques (Jan. 17) - "Increase Sales by Knowing Your Customers"; Effective Business Writing (Jan 22) - "Get the Words Right, Succeed in Business"; Effective Client Servicing (Jan. 23) - "Please Clients with a Winning Team"; Corporate Image Enhancement and Personality Development (Jan. 29) - "Corporate Image for Team Success". Held at Businessmaker Academy - Suite 1503 West Tower, PSE Bldg. (Tektite) Ortigas Center, these courses are open to the public for a minimal fee. For inquiries and reservations, call 687-4445/687-3416/687-4645

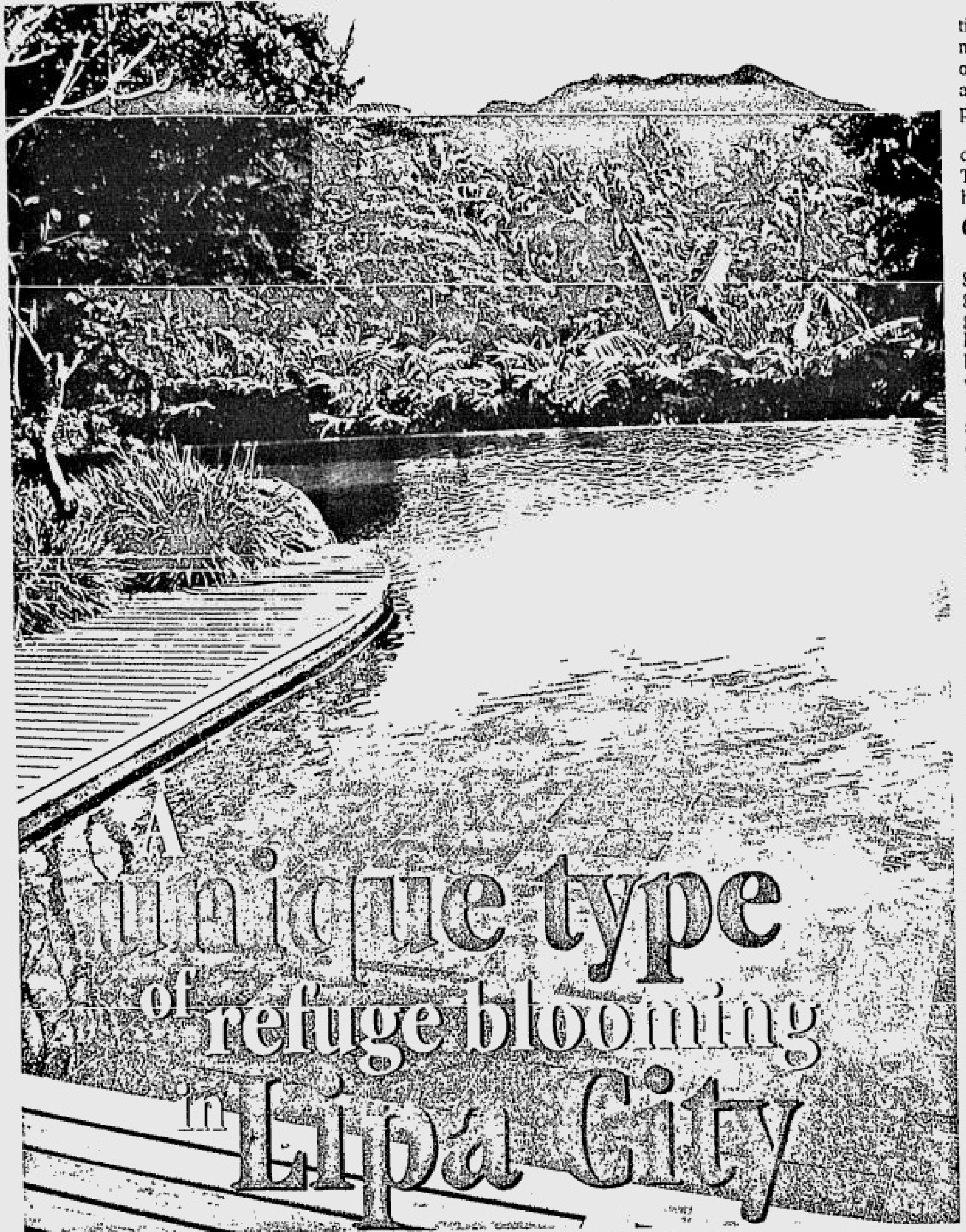
LFC TAPS AI-AI DELAS ALAS AS PRODUCT ENDORSER

RP's comedy queen Ai-Ai delas Alas recently signed a contract with Lorenzana Food Corp (LFC) as the celebrity endorser of Filtaste Sukang Sasa. Filtaste Sukang Sasa is the brand new name of LFC's Original Sukang Paombong which was first introduced in the US 50 years ago. Signing the contract are Ai-Ai and LFC president George Lorenzana. Also present at the signing rites were (standing from left) ace TV host and Ai-Ai's manager Boy Abunda, LFC brand manager Christina Cipriano, Artistshop management supervisor Elaine Antolin, Artistshop managing director Tito Alcala, and LFC sales and marketing manager Leonardo Rodriguez. LFC is the country's original manufacturer and pioneer exporter of various Filipino products.

DAR SECRETARY'S GOES TO ITALY

Shown is Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) after handing a book he wrote titled 'An Urgent Call for Cooperative Revolution' to vice president of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Margherita Boniver during an official trip to Italy to seal a stronger partnership for the on-going P1.118 billion Agrarian Reform Development Support Project (ARCDSP) in Mindanao.

A unique type of refuge blooming in Lipa City



RIGHT after a relaxing spa, one can dip into the pool with the mountain as the backdrop.

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

THE ROAD to The Farm at San Benito is long, narrow and winding. But once there, you'll realize why it was there and why it was developed.

The Farm, as it is more commonly referred to, is not really a farm—there are no pigs or chickens but there are organic vegetable gardens and black swans and peacocks in this 24-hectare property.

Owned by Perla and Eckard Rempe, The Farm is actually a boutique health and wellness resort located at the foothills of Mt. Malarayat in Lipa, Batangas.

Indeed, with manicured gardens, swimming pools scattered in different settings, beautiful and restful massage huts, meditating corners plus the majestic view of the mountain range, the surrounding is already therapeutic.

However, The Farm has more to offer than just the serene ambience.

Healing the mind and body

The Farm is also known as the Hippocrates Health Institute of Asia with its fully integrated medical facility specializing in alternative, non-Western techniques of diagnosing and treating illnesses and diseases of the mind and body.

Believing in the development of the total person, The Farm encourages its guests to indulge in a variety of activities that rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit—from basic massage therapies to fully structured weeks-long alternative healing programs.

An overnight wellness package would include use of The Farm facilities, three gourmet meals, an hour of medical consultation, an hour of relaxation massage and 30 minutes of peppermint foot scrub or reflexology, participation in resort-scheduled spiritual development classes and fitness activity programs.

> Those with more serious health conditions are advised to take a 3-6 week stay at The Farm under a more individually tailored healing program

In fact, those with more serious health conditions are advised to take a 3-6 week stay at The Farm under a more individually tailored healing program.

Other facilities

Other facilities at The Farm include a gourmet restaurant. several juice bars, a jungle trail, four private swimming pools, a jungle gym, a spa with seven treatment rooms, healing water springs, an amphitheater, a library and orchidarium, and an extensive network of private gardens.

A guest can enjoy a range of programs designed around the concept of learning—by doing holistic, proactive health care and maintenance.

They can choose from a variety of medical options, including a one-hour medical consultation, iris analysis, dark field microscopy, kirlian electrophotography as well as colon hydrotherapy and colema treatments, derma ray massage and psycho-emotional analysis.

Programs of various lengths are available to accommodate individual health conditions and tailored to the particular needs of each guest.

85/15 gourmet cuisine

Believing in Hippocrates (the father of medicine), who once said "Let food be thy medicine and let medicine be thy food," the Farm adopted the 85/15 gourmet cuisine, which is the first of its kind in Asia.

Simply put, the 85 refers to the percentage of which the food being served at The Farm is not cooked, meaning fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, germinated grains and nuts.

The remaining 15 percent are those that need to be cooked, for example, rice, creamy vegetable soup and pasta dishes.

This unique menu revolves around the idea that true nutrition only comes from "living" food.

Tropical hideaway

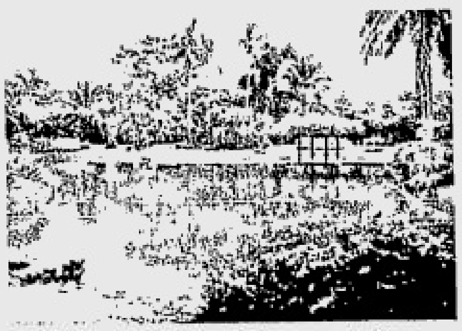
The Farm was set up over a year ago, and walking around the property, one can surmise that the place has a lot more of space waiting to be developed.

Right now, The Farm offers four types of accommodations. The rustic Sulu Terrace Suites are modeled after the traditional rice barns of Southern Philippines, with its wooded beam ceilings and windows that overlook a tree canopy.

The Anahaw Villas are also native-inspired suites with a unique two-floor design overlooking the west side of a stream that borders The Farm.

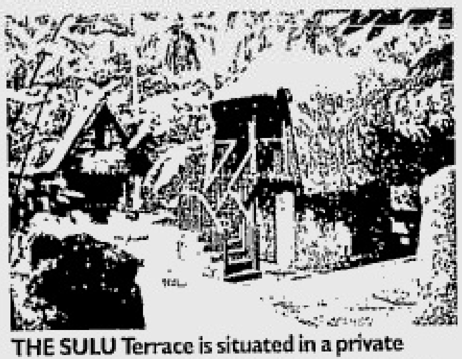
The Palmera suites are designed in luxurious tropical modern style and is surrounded by its own spacious garden while the six Garden Villas offer the ultimate personal space, which is also set in its own garden, a private lanai and cool spring fountain.

Indeed, with all these offerings at The Farm, even an overnight stay in this luxurious tropical hideaway will already serve as a sanctuary for guests who seek the balance and harmony they have lost in this stressful world.



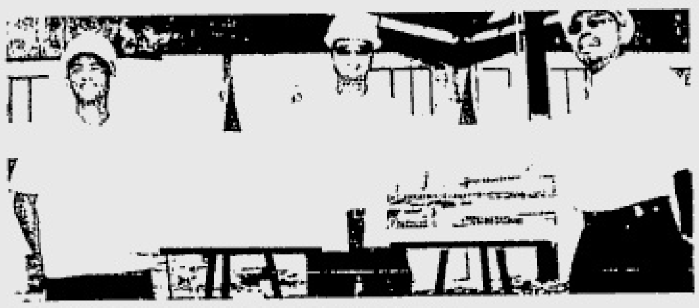
RIGHT at the middle of the property lies a lake where one can meditate or just relax.

GUESTS at the Palmera suites can enjoy the view of the garden right from the bedroom.



THE SULU Terrace is situated in a private 2,000-square-meter land surrounded by trees.

THE FARM grows its own food to assure its quality and safety.



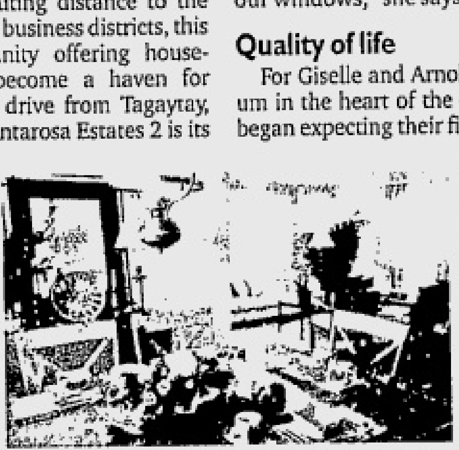
LARGEST SPORTS CENTER IN LIBIS
The time capsule of Club 650 was laid down by its directors in Libis, Quezon City, recently. Club 650 is building one of the largest sports complexes and commercial centers in the area. From left are directors Junior Banson, AS Tanjangco and Ed Bolaños, Club 650 will feature top class badminton, basketball, indoor football and boxing facilities and a neighborhood mall.

Santarosa Estates residents redefine quality of life

YOUNG urban professionals seeking relief from the pollution and the frenetic pace of big city living are finding an alternative lifestyle in Santarosa Estates 2, a thriving community in the heart of the dynamic self-contained Sta. Rosa community in Laguna.

Offering a view of Mt. Banahaw in the distance but within commuting distance to the Makati, Pasig and Manila business districts, this LPHI-developed community offering house-and-lot packages has become a haven for young families. A short drive from Tagaytay, the main attraction of Santarosa Estates 2 is its idyllic setting characterized by early morning mist, clear blue skies and evenings ideal for star-gazing.

A Santarosa resident, Vicky Pangilinan relates that it is easy to forget the tensions of her profession as fashion accessories designer and informal partner of her architect husband John after a day's work. "Our stress levels easily subside once we enter the village," she relates.



FOR YOUNG families who wish to live closer to nature, house-and-lot packages are available with floor areas ranging from 90 to 165 sq m.

The Pangilinans were content to reside in a busy Parañaque subdivision near the international airport until her son, Miguel, now 3, developed bronchial problems when he was only a three-month-old infant. At six months, he was dependent on asthma maintenance medicine, a development that prodded them to seek a community with fresh, unspoiled surroundings. Together with their firstborn, Stella, now 4, the couple soon after purchased a three-bedroom Santarosa Estates property.

In their cozy Santarosa Estates home where they grow their own herbs, Miguel hardly gets sick and neither does Stella. It helps that early mornings are almost always pleasant and that the climate is several degrees cooler than Metro Manila. In addition, the Pangilinans have peace of mind that they live in a serene and secure community. "We no longer need to have protective steel grills on our windows," she says with a smile.

Quality of life

For Giselle and Arnold Dayrit, a condominium in the heart of the city was fine until they began expecting their firstborn. Like many other couples who purchased house and lot at Santarosa Estates, they moved to allow their 15-month-old Joaquin the privilege of living close to nature in a community where all of them could easily make friends. "We all enjoy quality of life," says Giselle, and for this reason, it is easier to cultivate neighborliness.

Quality of life is very much helped by the fact that the supermarket, church, village commercial center and a wet market that carries the bountiful produce of Cavite and Laguna are all within a two-kilometer radius. Giselle runs a franchise of David's Salon near her home and has to only cross the street outside her village gate to go to work. For his part, Arnold telecommutes and can get the job done within the comforts of his house. Should either of them desire to be employed, job opportunities are offered by the many multinational manufacturing, electronic and IT companies operating in Sta. Rosa.

When Joaquin reaches school age, Giselle and Arnold will be able to choose from among a range of educational institutions in the area the one best suited for him. These include Brent international school, De la Salle Canlubang, St. Scholastica's Westgrove, Don Bosco and even a Waldorf-inspired playgroup called Acacia.

"We live out of town." And love it, as well.

WEAP reminds developers of wastewater effects

COMMERCIAL and industrial establishments, particularly housing developers and other builders, are reminded of the ill effects of wastewater on the environment and the people's health.

This reminder was underscored by the Water Environment Association of the Philippines in announcing the holding of a one-day technical seminar on "Improved Analytical Techniques, Equipment Selections, Trouble Shooting in Wastewater Treatment Processes and Updates on Relevant Environmental Regulations." WEAP is a member-association of the Water Environment Federation in the United States.

The seminar will be held on Jan. 16 at the Manila Pavilion (formerly Holiday Inn) on United Nations Avenue, Ermita, Manila.

The seminar will provide procedures in wastewater characterization, equipment selection and upgrading retrofitting of treatment plants and practical information on trouble-shooting in biochemical wastewater treatment.

WEAP said it is committed to preserve a clean water environment and continue to provide concerned sectors and the public with the latest development in wastewater treatment technology. Thus, it aims to provide information and take necessary action to address environmental protection, particularly regarding wastewater, in the Philippines. It has been actively participating in the Weftec annual exhibits and conference in the US since 1994.

Invited to join the seminar are pollution control officers, engineers, government regulatory officials, developers, consultants, suppliers, teachers and students and other interested parties. For details, call up Lourdes of the WEAP secretariat at 371-9790 or 410-1119.

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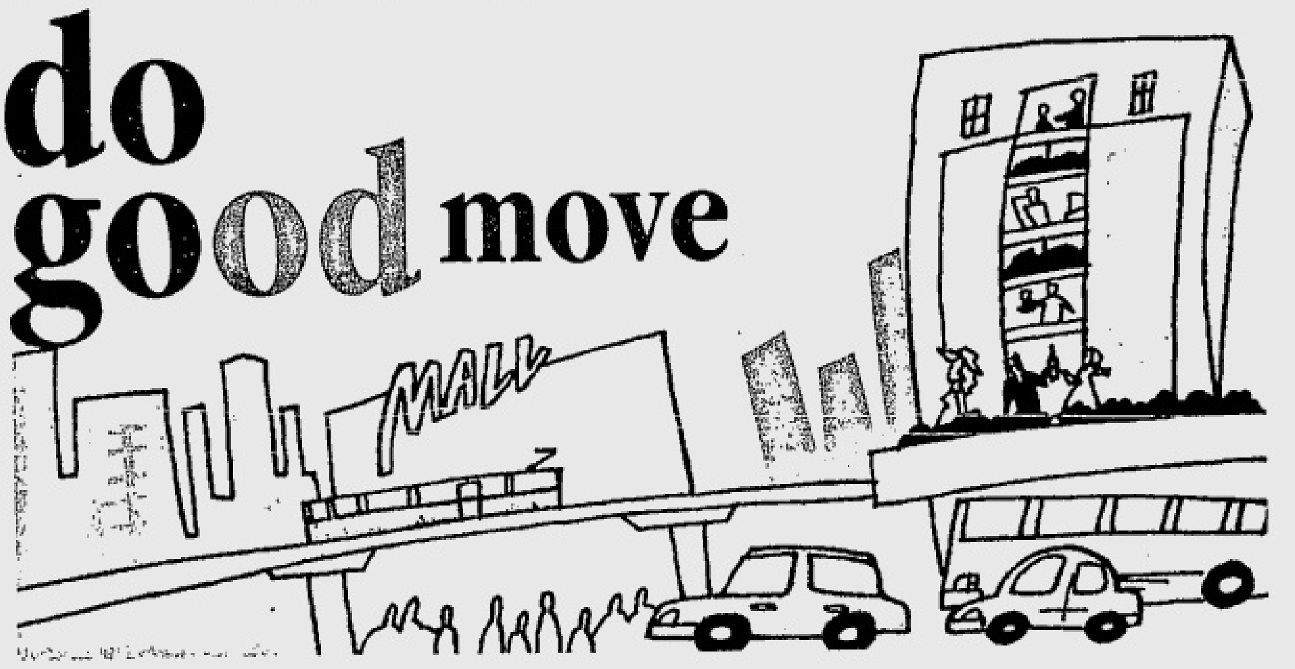
REALESTATE

Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Buying a condo unit a good move



IN TODAY'S fast-paced society marked by increasing costs and aspirational goals, one will find many individuals switching from their comfortable homes to condominium units that offer a totally different lifestyle.

Smaller families, single people or couples, aging baby boomers and empty nesters, overseas Filipino workers, entrepreneurs or average working professionals are among the market segments making possible condominium unit sales in prime locations in the metropolis.

Reasons for buying

The reasons for opting to purchase and live in a high-rise home are aplenty.

The freedom afforded by the condominium lifestyle is one of the most alluring aspects of the concept. Condo dwellers may go away for long periods of time secure in the thought that their home building unit is being maintained. Indeed, a brand-new condominium unit is a great idea if you don't want to spend a great deal of time doing yard work and home repairs.

When you buy a condo unit you are also joining a homeowners' association which is responsible for the maintenance of units, insurance, garbage and outdoor areas. People who like the idea of amenities, or prefer the convenience of being located near centers of shopping and employment are bound to be the ones who can happily embrace the condominium lifestyle.

First-time buyers generally regard condominiums a good way to get into the housing market if they cannot afford to buy a house which may cost anywhere from P2 million to P5 million nowadays. One attractive option is the single condominium unit, which may be brand-new or perhaps not even constructed yet, or more spacious condo homes in established neighborhoods.

Indeed, one major real estate food for thought or high priority that makes condominiums a worthy and attractive option for many who are thinking of moving to their very own new home is its investment potential. Buying one or several condominium homes as investments can be part of a larger strategy that the informed investor takes to increase wealth faster than working for a monthly wage.

By investing in a condominium, especially from a reliable property developer, people get the most mileage for their hard-earned money. One new condominium project that will soon rise in the progressive city of Mandaluyong is Pioneer Pointe. A forward-looking project of Filinvest Alabang Inc., Pioneer Pointe is a 28-story residential condominium on Pioneer Street, midway between Makati and Ortigas.

Common thread

Random feedback obtained from those belonging to the first batch of investors of Pioneer Pointe, many of whom are working professionals, show a common thread: they have given careful thought on what their lifestyle (as well as those of their immediate kin) is at present and what it will be like five to 10 years from now.

They look forward to living in a city they have grown familiar with or have developed an affinity for, and which offers convenience (greatly eliminating commuter stress) in traveling to work, school or other usual destinations.

Pioneer Pointe's strategic location at the center of the booming metropolis makes it a preferred residential option.

The art of investment

What makes Pioneer Pointe an even more attractive option, both for the average working professionals or overseas Filipino workers who are always looking for wise ways to invest their hard-earned money, is its secure development concept.

Condominium investors are accorded a convenient investment vehicle wherein funds are pooled in trust accounts for specifically developing the real estate project. The trustee bank, East West Banking Corp., pays the contractors/suppliers directly. The guaranteed funding means the project will commence when there is sufficient number of investors.

The low-risk investment scheme is designed to maximize value and security to potential homeowners. Instead of buyers purchasing real estate from a developer, they assume the role of co-developers of the project. The conventional developer and his high profit margin are eliminated from the equation. In the process, the individual co-developers or investors are therefore able to acquire their property practically at cost, thereby generating substantial savings.

Pioneer Pointe easily merges then as a cost-efficient high-rise residential option of unsurpassed affordability and convenience. It is time-bound and specific, with Filinvest Alabang Inc. having committed to start the project in April 2004, when it would have been expected to be 80 percent sold.

At the end of the construction period, any and all excess on the project cost will be duly returned to the investors. The attractive investment scheme does away with the usual financial commitment worries that come with other quality residential investments. It is considered less risky compared to preselling schemes of the past.

Homeowner's resolutions for 2004

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

BUILDING DREAMS

ANOTHER year has passed and we in the real estate industry are looking forward to a project filled and prosperous New Year. Real estate buyers will again purchase vacant lots for investment and many are expected to move into their new homes. Some will likewise remodel their homes and will consider upgrading into a larger and more expensive one.

Enjoying the benefits of homeownership also requires a great responsibility from its owners. This is truer if the home that one is living in is currently mortgaged with a lender. To brace ourselves for the coming year, here are some resolutions that we can do to protect and enhance the value of our real estate investments.

- **On Responsible Citizenship.** Being a responsible citizen means paying real estate taxes due to our pieces of property and paying ahead of time means that we can get a discount. Check with the real estate department at the city or town hall where your property is located on the discounts that you may get if you pay the taxes in advance. Most local government units give at least a 10 percent discount if you pay real estate taxes in advance.
- **On Responsible Ownership.** A responsible homeowner also updates and pays homeowner's association dues on time. If you have not been doing this, it is time to update those association dues. Always remember that these dues are to pay for the services that you get for living in a quiet, peaceful and clean neighborhood. This includes costs for security, garbage collection, clubhouse maintenance, street cleaning, maintenance of open spaces and street lighting. All of these are being maintained mainly from the monthly dues being collected by the neighborhood association.

A well-kept subdivision constantly increases in value and is always desired by many prospective real estate investors. Subdivisions that are not maintained and not looking their best are the ones which do not have the funds for maintenance. Your monthly dues will surely return back to you a tenfold.

- **On Healthy Living.** Make the resolve to clean your surroundings always. Maybe you just need a new lawn mower, or it can be simply giving instructions to your household helpers. An unclean environment mainly causes health problems. You may want to call your nearest pest control company to remove those undesirable termites out of your home.
- **On Safety.** As a car gets older, it gets less safe because the parts get worn out and can fail at any given time. The same analogy is true with a home—an older home needs more attention when it comes to maintenance. A fire can be one of the biggest threats to your investment and most are caused by not making safety a priority and by faulty electrical wiring.

If you have a problem with the electrical system of your house, do not try to fix it yourself if you are not qualified to do so. Always ask a professional for help. I always advice my friends to have at least fire extinguishers located at the common areas of the house.

- **On Financial Matters.** If you are currently paying for a home loan, make the resolution that you will save extra money to prepay that loan. This may require some belt tightening but getting out of the mortgage quicker would open other investment opportunities for you. If you do not plan at all to prepay, at least you can start generating that emergency fund to cover any unexpected events that may affect your budget.
- **On Home Insurance.** It is always a good idea to buy home insurance. It is something that we would definitely need in case disaster strikes but wish that we would never have to use it. Insurance premiums are quite affordable and you may want to check with your insurer regarding this matter.
- **On the Kitchen that You Have Always Wanted.** If you have always dreamed of buying that modular kitchen, then go ahead and build your dream. A simple change in furniture arrangement or a new paint job in your home can also make it look and feel new again.
- **On the Simple Pleasures of Home Ownership.** Take the time to enjoy the home that you have worked so hard to acquire. Enjoy it with your family and with your friends. Remember that it is an investment that appreciates with time. Like the gardener who is faithful to the flowers by constant watering and nurturing, the homeowner also does everything to preserve and enhance the value of his investment property.

(Alexis A. Acacio is an associate professor of civil engineering at the University of the Philippines. For comments and advice you may reach him at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.)

MR. and Mrs. Von Friedrich and Lilia Aaron-Paterro are shown during the symbolical turnover of their unit. With them are Highland Prime Prime president Antonio Henson, Belle Corp. Vice Chair Willie Ocier (far left), AVP for finance Gina Magsanoc and engineers Robert Antonio and Ramir Magracia.

The Woodridge at Tagaytay Highlands

HIGHLANDS Prime Inc. recently turned over the first unit of its maiden project, The Woodridge, in Tagaytay Highlands, to its new owner Mr. and Mrs. Von Friedrich and Lilia Paterro. Highlands Prime president Antonio A. Henson and vice chair Willy N. Ocier personally turned over the units to the proud new owners.

The Woodridge is a medium density residential condominium development located on one of the highest points in Tagaytay Highlands. It was launched in October 2002 and the first building of 12 units was completed in 10 months. Two other buildings consisting of 48 units will be completed in the next two months.

Designed by the prestigious architectural firm Recio + Casas, the structural engineering firm E. Morales and Associates and the well known landscape architect I.P. Santos and Associates, The Woodridge masterfully weaves timber and other stone structures with the natural contours of the mountains to create a tree-lined flower strewn landscape that provides residents with a vacation-like ambience all year round.

At the Woodridge, beauty is seen from every point of view. From the verdant Tagaytay Highlands golf course to the tranquil Laguna de Bay and to the majestic mountains all around, it is a perfect place to enjoy Tagaytay's cool mountain air and take a relaxing break from hectic city life with the family and friends.

Sales of the Woodridge have been moving well. Sixty-five percent of the 90 units opened for sale have been taken.

A mountain comes alive

WORKERS from surrounding communities are abuzz with activity in the 677-hectare paradise where Filinvest is planting life for future residents.

The natural assets of the area are being rehabilitated with the planting of more than a million trees by the time the mountain residential resort is completed. This too is a major part of the company's Green Evolution campaign.

Named Timberland Heights, it is a tribute to the magnificence of Mother Nature. Filinvest Land's commitment to its rehabilitation is manifested in the development concept planned. This is the future home of verdant farming and wholesome recreation with a nature theme.

LUCIANO G. Hornilla, regional director of EMB Central, helping a tree-planting participant

The Mandala Residential Farm Estates, which has already obtained an ECC clearance, will advocate organic farming on what is classified as slope farming. This process protects and reinforces the stability and propagation of living soil. Herb patches of Italian oregano, purple and sweet Vietnamese basil, marjoram, rosemary, thyme and tarragon will provide an aromatic ambience conducive to healing. Vegetables ranging from tomato varieties, green pepper, cauliflower, arugula and romaine lettuce can be bought from central farm plots. Eventually, residents of Mandala Estates can also have their produce put into the market through Timberland Heights' estate services center.

They say living close to nature is the secret of health and long life. Throw in the mountain air, free of city pollution and one buys into the best living environment one can find. The trend toward more relaxed lifestyles is more than ever becoming the course to follow in this century when stress has become the world's biggest threat to quality of life.

Andrew Gotianun Jr., the visionary behind Timberland Heights, advocates the principle of simplified but enriched living—one which an environment such as Timberland Heights is dedicated to. The promise of waking up at sunrise with a cool mountain breeze and blue skies, breakfast of fresh fruits picked from the farm, home-baked bread, organically bred eggs is indeed a storybook scenario. Children who grew up in the city can be raised in a culture aware of the environment and its impact on the survival of this planet.

WOMEN from the different NGOs at the terraced tree-planting site

As early as now, Filinvest Land's development team has initiated its community immersion program, engaging the community in jobs and livelihood prospects. The priority is to source 80 percent of the total workforce from the communities around the development, a welcome initiative lauded by the municipal government and concerned nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Several seminars and project orientations have been conducted with the mayor, NGO and community representatives.

During one of these seminars, farm manager Eric Matic introduced the range of crop production possibilities which will be propagated. A vermi-compost production center is expected as the community's source of livelihood.

Yes, the mountain is a-buzz and the hum of positive expectations is echoing in the horizon of Timberland Heights.

Fitness LIFESTYLE

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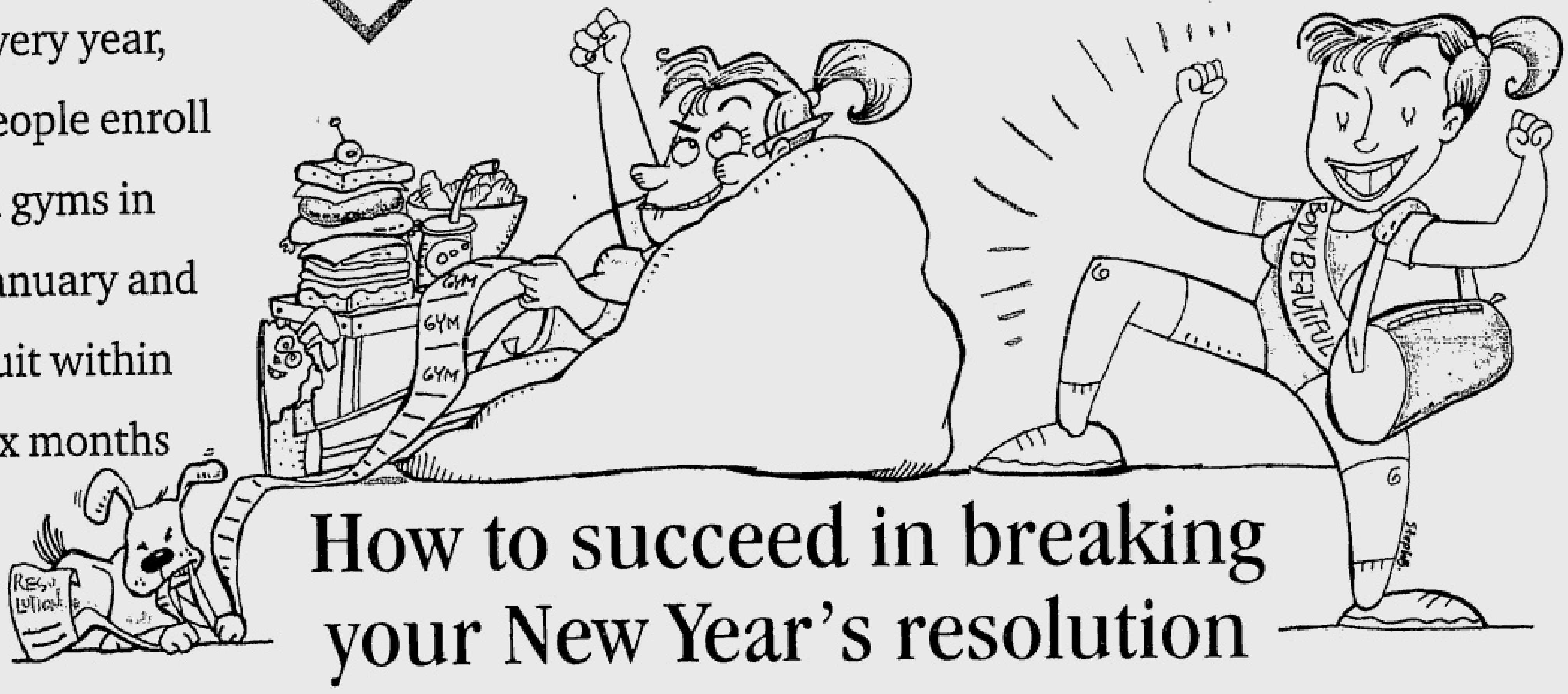
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

Every year, people enroll in gyms in January and quit within six months



How to succeed in breaking your New Year's resolution

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

THIS January, cash registers in fitness centers all over the country will be ringing merrily, thanks to New Year's resolutions to get in shape. January is to a gym what December is to a toy store—the month with the biggest sales. Yet by the middle of the year majority of people who signed up for gym membership in January will have dropped out and quit.

What is interesting is that some of these people are repeat customers. In other words, the January phenomenon of joining a gym is an annual event. Year after year, people do the same thing—join in January and quit within six months.

Since the major reason most people enroll in a gym is to lose weight and look better, it seems logical to assume that they quit because they aren't getting the results they want.

So what does this all mean? Does it mean that gyms do not live up to their promise to help members lose weight and get fit? Does it mean that people shouldn't join a gym because they are likely to quit anyway?

Or maybe it means that many people sabotage their own attempts at joining a gym. This seems to be true for many people. In fact, it might be safe to say they are unknowingly experts at not getting results from their fitness program.

If you want a no-fail, foolproof plan to become a delinquent gym member because of lack of results, here it is. Follow this to the letter and I can guarantee that you will drop out in a few months. If you are really successful, you may not even last till Holy Week.

Now, if you want to be among the triumphant minority who develop the exercise habit and gain a fitter, shapelier and healthier body, then do the exact opposite.

Enroll in the wrong gym.

There are many kinds of gyms. What is right for one person may be wrong for another. If you drive a car, enroll in a gym with little or no parking space. That's a quick way to get frustrated every time you go for a workout.

If you are shy and inexperienced and want to sweat off gyms forever, join a gym with large crowds and little personalized service. If you want to get fit to play a sport, join a gym that specializes in bodybuilding.

Do more talking than exercising.

Strike up long conversations with fellow members, instructors, front desk personnel and just about anybody you meet. After all, you joined the gym because you wanted to work out with other people. So get your money's worth and talk away.

Before you know it, two hours will have passed and you will leave the gym thinking you got a good workout. Well, at least you can be assured your tongue did. It would be the only muscle in your body that exercised nonstop.

Soon you'll get tired of spending a lot of time in the gym with not much to show for it.

Get engrossed in the television while you exercise.

Whoever had the great idea to put television sets all over the gym was a genius. Cycling on a stationary bike isn't exactly the most exciting thing to do so watching your favorite sitcom while you exercise is the "spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down."

During the exciting parts of the TV show, you can slow down to an almost complete stop so that you can concentrate on the program rather than your workout. Who cares if you end up burning only half the calories you want to shed?

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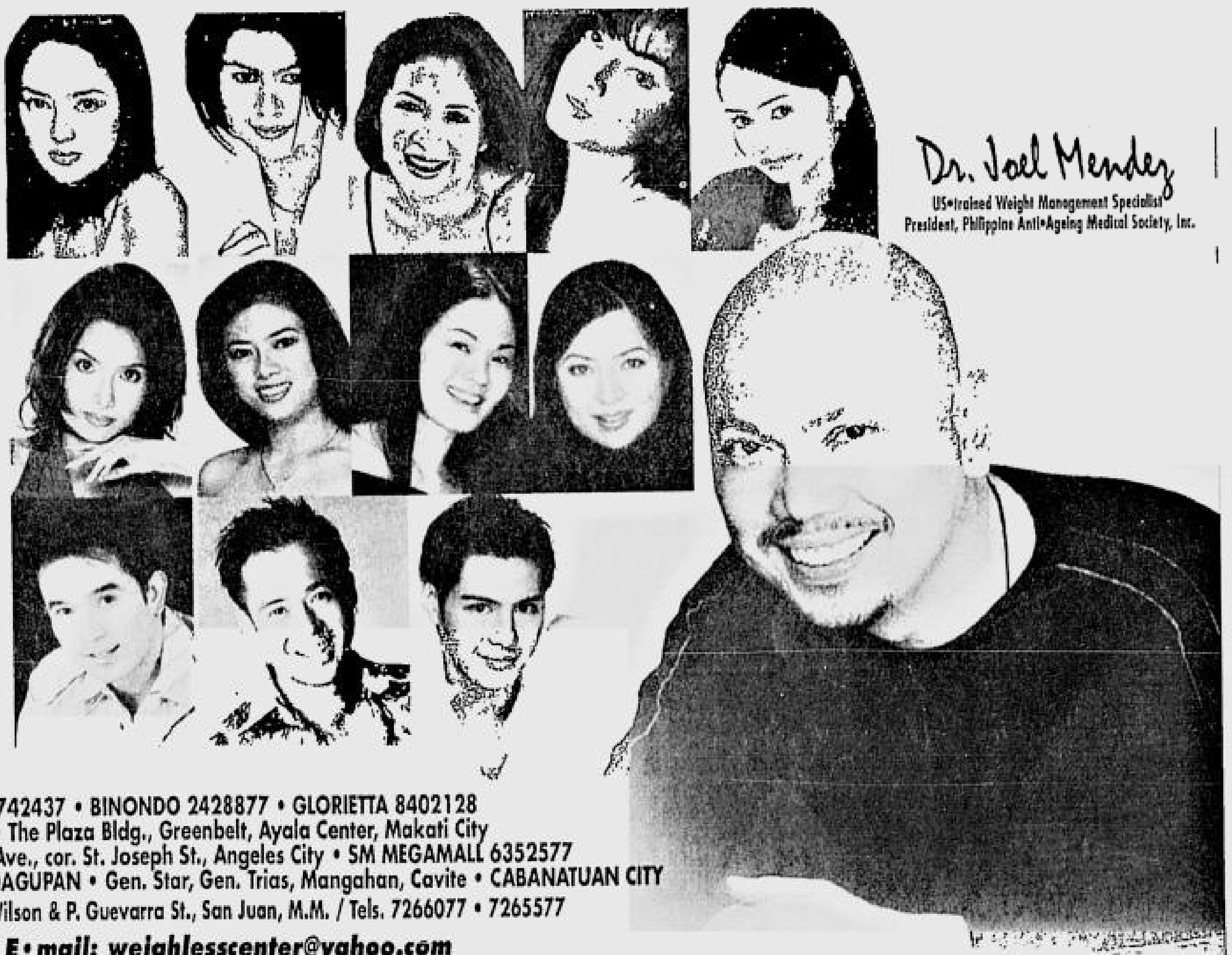
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Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

COSMO Manille has its share of winetasting, wine and cheese parties and wine clubs.

But when you get a ring to go winetasting in the world-renowned Hunter Valley in down-under Australia, you pack your anti-acid pills (if you are acidic) and go-go-go.

A smooth ride, although a bit cramped, in the eco-class of Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong and onward to Sydney with our gang of 18 was great fun, loaded with anticipation, *palanggas.*

Heading the pack was the beautiful couple, mega shakers and achievers, business whiz **Arnold Co** and his wife, super attractive business entrepreneur **Ruth Velasco Co** who have delighted us with their A-list Haagen Dazs, Oliver's Sandwiches and, now, the to-die-for Max Brenner Chocolates.

An overnight stay at the swinging Sheraton Hotel smack in downtown Sydney had us rushing out to shop then taking on a spin around Sydney's renowned Dahling, oops, I mean Darling Harbor, for a gorgeous sunset cruise, followed by a gastronomic feast at the picture-perfect, superb Café Sydney resto overlooking the beautiful well-lit-at-night Sydney Harbor where the menu will knock your socks off.

Next morning, all rested up and bright and early (except for my pals **Pepper Teehankee** and on-the-go **Tim Yap**, who hit the night spots the day before), and after a yummy breakfast at Sheraton's excellent coffee shop, we were all excited to start our Hunter Valley winetasting experience, *palanggas*. A short two-hour scenic drive from Sydney, we were bent on learning as much as we could as we were whisked off to Newcastle to visit the office of top Australian wine selectors and meet two swell men who would take care of us for the next three days—managing director **Greg Wall** and marketing and business development manager **Graeme Bashford**—since Hunter Valley Wine Society has been established in the Philippines by the dynamic duo Ruth and Arnold Co, with the so helpful **Mauricio "Mayo" Alcon**, as club director.

Meeting the high priest

We were then introduced to a group of wine experts who chose and graded the different wines for distribution to club members. All wines were covered in white cloth to make sure there would be no biases for known brands. The panel was headed by world-class—the high priest of them all—**Karl Stockhausen**. He has chaired the panel for the past six years.

Karl has been with the famous winemaker Lindemans for 35 years and is responsible for making some of Australia's most highly awarded wines.

We started our first winetasting session at, take note, *palanggas*, 10 a.m. with a 2000 Riesling from Clare Valley in Adelaide Hills. We were taught how to swirl the glass, how to smell and check the color. The basics of grape varieties grown in Australia were explained.

The expert panel agreed "that the 2002 Shiraz from Riverina would rate a 16 (out of 20) and would merit a bronze medal in the competition."

We were also taught how to savor the flavor of the wine, then spit it out into spittoons. Actually, most, if not all of us, sipped the delicate red and white wines (instead of spitting them out). Drinking all that for two whole hours had most of us giddy and our heads delightfully spinning.

To bring us down a bit, most of the weight watchers and healthful eaters, like wine connoisseurs **Karen Santos** and **Bea Zobel Jr.**, adorable **Mons Tantoco** and Singapore Airlines mega secret weapon **Rita Dy**, had several servings of the super healthy lunch at the lecture and wine hall, prepared by the wine club.

Sleeping beauties

Heading by bus to our next winery for more winetasting, it was fun to see everyone looking like sleeping beauties with a couple of loud snores from, ooops, I ain't saying who, *palanggas*, for the hour-long drive. Next stop, we met up with **Karl** and **Steve Dodd**, also experienced winemakers, along with general manager **Cameron McAlpine**, in Briar Ridge in Mount View, the southern rolling hills tip of Hunter Valley, which is reputed to have 20 percent of its annual production sold to the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe.

Ahhh, the 2003 Briar Ridge, Steve Dodd Signature Chardonnay was a big hit with everyone. When I asked Karl what wines went well with Chinese food, he said: "Don't bother asking for wine. Beer goes perfectly well with Chinese and Indian food!"

Next, we hit the reds, with the 2002 Briar Ridge Karl Stockhausen Signature Shiraz. If *moi* may say so, Shiraz is probably the best wine variety produced in the Hunter Valley. It is classic, full of complexity, deep dark red in color with a taste of berries and woody aroma.

Later, we checked in at the truly world-class luxurious villas of the Cypress Lakes Resort in the heart of the lush Hunter Valley. Dinner that night saw us at the renowned five-star, to-die-for, Robert's at Pepper Tree where we had, for starters, champagne and finger-food for cocktails at the open Terraza, followed by an incredible dinner inside the cozy restaurant—from crumbled zucchini flower and crisp fried prawns in chili to baked John Dory or grilled prime fillet of beef, plus tons of more white and red wines accompanying our meal.

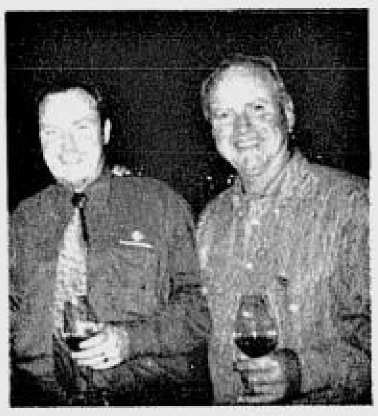
Danding's flying visits

A friend whispered to me that even business tycoon **Danding Cojuangco** would fly over in a helicopter from his gorgeous farm outside Sydney to have lunch here with business associates or friends. That's how good this resto is. It was here where our gang was surprised with certificates inducting us as bona fide members of the Hunter Valley Wine Society-Philippines.

Since most of us had so much of the excellent wine during dinner, we later had a laughing party and, take note, more wine at the Cypress Villa where young popular couple, businessman **Sander Tantoco** and wife **Mons**, and **Tim Yap** were booked. What funny thing happened at the party is a secret, dahlings.

ARNOLD and Ruth Co, founders of the Hunter Valley Wine Society-Philippines, with world-renowned wine expert Karl Stockhausen (second from right)

THE WHOLE gang at the Wine Function Hall at Newcastle, office of top Australian Wine Selectors



INTERNATIONAL Trade Manager Gary D'Riordan and Greg Wall, CEO of Hunter Valley Wine Society, Autralia

PALS for always. Ruth Co, Mons Tantoco and Margarita Fores. At the back are Karen Santos, Arnold Co, destination promotion manager of the Tourism New South Wales Anne Holt and Sander Tantoco

CLASS PHOTO 2003. Taken at the Briar Ridge Winery and Vineyard in Mount View. Johnny Litton, Joel Uichico, Bea Zobel and Pepper Teehankee.

SHANGRI-LA Makati's dame of decorum, mega communications director Joy Wassmer, with Sydney Shangri-La Hotel's vivacious eyecatcher Leslie Wade upon our arrival at the hotel

SINGAPORE Airlines' Rita Dy

Did you know that...?

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

...CARBOHYDRATES are the main sources of energy for the body?

During digestion, carbohydrates are broken down into glucose or blood sugar, which is what the brain and central nervous system need for energy.

Thus, don't consider carbo as the culprit in weight gain, although too much carbo can turn into fat if you don't burn it through exercise.

The secret to keeping trim? Decrease your high-glycemic foods and increase low-glycemic ones.

High-glycemic foods include refined white sugar, pastries, cakes, candies, cookies, potato chips/pretzels, white-flour pasta, instant rice potatoes, carbonated soft drinks and alcohol.

Low-glycemic foods include whole-grain pasta, high-fiber fruits/veggies, soy, hard beans, whole-wheat bread, oatmeal and bran.

...Antioxidants are a must for good health?

Every time you breathe, your body produces free radicals (uncontrolled oxidants that can damage good cells).

Factors that can increase the presence of free radicals include air pollution and chronic diseases, second-hand smoke, carcinogens in food (fried food, charcoal-broiled, cured meats, nitrites), too much exercise (yes, believe it or not), menopause, sun exposure, x-rays, stress.

Antioxidants can delay the aging process, lower cholesterol levels, help protect against cancer, stroke and heart disease, suppress the growth of tumors, help the body's defenses against asthma, bronchitis and emphysema, and protect against environmental pollution.

Some of the best-known antioxidants are vitamin A (especially alpha and beta-carotene), vitamin C, vitamin E, co-enzyme Q10, gingko biloba, minerals, selenium, (in tandem with vitamin E) glutathione, lipoic acid, melatonin, zinc.

Foods rich in antioxidants include red grapes, tomatoes, green tea, spinach, brocolli, cauliflower, watermelon, sweet potatoes, mangoes, peaches, pumpkin, cantaloupe, soy, garlic, onion.

Anti-stress or anti-fatigue herbs include St. John's Wort (alleviates depression and poor appetite), shiitake mushrooms and lemon balm, and Siberian and Asian ginseng. But more than their stress-fighting abilities, these herbs also help increase the body's resistance to infection.

...Women are the main victims of osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is the steady decrease in bone density, making them weak and brittle. Until the age of 30, bones in general grow in density. But after age 30, bones start decreasing in density.

Estrogen is the female hormone that helps the body incorporate calcium into the bone. Now you can see why post-menopausal women are at risk.

Some factors that increase a woman's osteoporosis risk are family history of the condition, thin build, smoking, drinking alcohol, early menopause, no pregnancies, inadequate calcium in diet, lack of weight-bearing/resistance training exercise, overactive thyroid and excessive caffeine or carbonated beverage intake.

Remember that walking, stair-climbing, jogging and tennis can help increase bone density. Drink non-fat milk (like Nestlé Calcium Plus) twice daily. Take in supplements daily with calcium citrate (1,000-1,500 mg) and magnesium (500 mg).

...Meditation can lower the biological age of a person?

There is a connection between stress hormones and aging. Reaction to stress can cause the release of stress hormones that can wreak havoc in our bodies. When the stress reaction happens, it does so at a fast pace—too fast for us to control it. However, there is such a thing as mind-body therapy, a technique that can calm the mind and help the body relax: meditation.

Studies have shown that long-term meditators have lower levels of cortisol and adrenaline in their bodies compared to non-meditators. This, plus their "coping" mechanisms, allow them to be stronger in the face of stress.

Forms of meditation you can try include yoga, tai-chi, transcendental meditation, Silva mind control and clairvision.

It's interesting to know that the levels of a steroid called DHEA (secreted by the adrenal gland) are directly connected to exposure to stress. The more stress there is, the lower the level of DHEA. The conclusion of certain studies is that, if a person can keep his or her DHEA levels up, the body will be able to resist stress better.

...The human brain loses 50,000-100,000 brain cells a day?

But don't be alarmed, we were born with more than a billion. There are no limits to the creative mind despite one's age. And so, it's not so much the number of cells we have but how we use it.

Picasso, Michelangelo, Tolstoy, Shaw and other geniuses lived and continued to be productive until they died. Amazing how Michelangelo was able to design the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in his 90s.

Studies have shown that the creative experience enhances the brain. And psychologists say that artists and writers produce more creative work in their 60s and 70s than in their 20s or 30s.

So if you think you're too old to learn new skills, think again. You could even master them faster at this stage in your life. And let's not forget: If you don't use it, you lose it.

...Nature sounds can heal you?

Here's a "breathing with nature" exercise. Go outdoors. Sit next to a tree or near a pond. Close your eyes. Listen with your ears, sense with every pore of your body and being—the sound of the wind against the trees, running water, the chirping of birds. Keep still. Breathe slowly. Inhale and exhale through your nostrils, but imagine that as you exhale, the beauty of nature's sounds exit through your heart.

Natural facial moisturizer

Want to give your face a moisturizing boost?

On a clean face, before sleeping, apply three dabs of extra virgin olive oil or coconut oil (also around the eyes). For a real emergency treatment, puncture a capsule of vitamin E and massage to your skin, then place your two hands on your face for 60 seconds to warm the skin and open up pores for better absorption.

Love and light!

References: Ageless Body, Timeless Mind, by Dr. Deepak Chopra

Vitamin Bible For The 21st Century, by Earl Mindell

Clairvision—Dr. Samuel Sagan Lectures: Jan. 30 and Feb. 4, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m, Manansala Loft, Rockwell Center, Makati.

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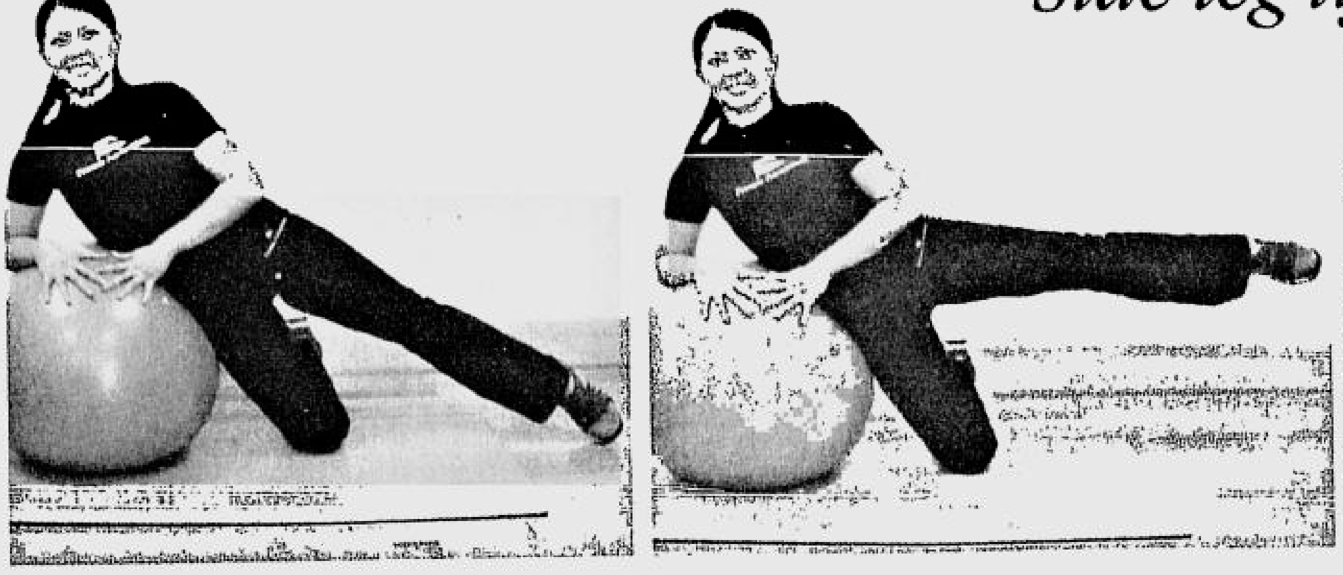
EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Side leg lift on stability ball



THIS exercise firms and tones the muscles of hips.

Equipment:

Stability ball and exercise mat. As a substitute, you can do the exercise at the side of a bed.

Exercise technique:

1. Start by kneeling down with the ball on your left side. Extend your right leg sideways. Slowly roll the ball to the left and lower your body until your waist and hip are resting firmly against the ball. This is your starting position.

2. Lift your right leg up to hip level, then lower it down. Do the desired number of repetitions.

3. To switch to the other side, bend your extended right leg and roll yourself back into a kneeling position. Put the ball on your other side and repeat instructions.

Performance tips:

1. Avoid sinking into your shoulder. Pull yourself up and away from your elbow.

2. Exhale as you lift the leg, inhale as you return it to starting position.

3. If you are used to doing side leg lift lying on the floor, you will notice that this exercise is harder to perform. That's because of the angle that the exercise is performed, which increases the range of motion of the lifting leg.

Repetitions:

Do 10 repetitions on each side.

How to succeed in breaking your New Year's resolution

From page C1

If your gym has thoughtfully provided TV sets in the weight-lifting area, lucky you. Now you can pay more attention to the latest news rather than the execution of your bicep curls.

Expect to get in shape in a few weeks.

What? You don't get the body of your dreams in a few short weeks? Something must be wrong with your gym. All the infomercials say you can look as fit and toned in just 4 minutes a day as the model demonstrating a fitness equipment, so why should you have to wait for a few months to see results in your body?

Look for excuses to be absent.

Your workouts are not that important so put them at the bottom of your priority list. Then it wouldn't be hard to look for excuses to be absent. The more times you are absent, the more you will lose your motivation to work out.

If you can't come up with a creative excuse to rationalize why you should skip your workout, get some inspiration from a survey done by the Physician and Sports Journal: "If I exercise, I won't have enough energy left for sex," "Exercise makes the hair on my legs grow and it hurts," "My hair might get messed up" and "The TV in the gym is always on something I don't want to watch."

Don't change your eating habits.

If you exercise, you can eat whatever you want and still lose weight. In fact, you can even eat more. Aren't you spending two hours a day at the gym exercising while watching a movie and talking your head off? Those two hours are worth a second serving of chocolate cake. When you still haven't lost weight despite going to the gym for a few months, conclude that exercise is a waste of time for weight loss and quit.

Choose a lengthy, complicated workout.

You want results and you want them fast. So choose a really advance workout. Ladies, why waste your time on the beginner aerobics class? That's for wimps who are out of shape. Go for the killer aero class that is jam-packed with people who all look like they could work out for hours. So what if you almost sprain your ankle and you are exhausted the whole day. Remember, the motto for success is "no pain, no gain."

Gentlemen, grab the latest muscle magazine issue and faithfully follow the program of Mr. Olympia or Mr. Universe. Never mind that they compete professionally and have been working out for years while you haven't lifted anything heavier than your briefcase. You are determined to get your six-pack before summer and, by golly, you are going to die trying. You won't have to wait long before you get so burned out by your lengthy and complicated workout that you won't return to the gym.

Choose your personal trainer for his looks.

If he's got a great-looking body, he must know what he's doing, right? Don't let it bother you that he doesn't know how to make a program for people with hypertension or diabetes. The point is, he looks great and he should be able to make you look great too. So don't worry. A few months later after you have injured your shoulder from following his advice, you will have a legitimate excuse to quit going to the gym.

Stick to the same old workout.

Why go through the hassle of learning a new routine every six weeks? Life is stressful enough as it is. You don't need to risk looking stupid learning something new. Going through another learning curve for a new workout is just not worth the effort. Doing the same old workout makes you bored and want to drop out of the gym all that much quicker. Your body may not even have the chance to stagnate before you quit.

Work out half-heartedly.

You can hasten your permanent departure from the gym by working out half-heartedly. You can do this consciously by not wanting to work so hard. Heaven forbid that you should sweat and exert some effort during your workout. Or you can do it subconsciously by substituting quantity for quality. One hour of walking slowly on the treadmill while watching TV or chatting with your neighbor is not the same as one hour of walking as if you were late for a hot date or an important interview.

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Three
RINGTONE: N3
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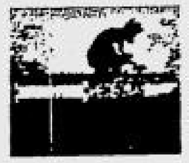
Nelly Furtado
Folklore
RINGTONE: N4
POLYTONE: T4
WALLPAPER: C4
LYRICS: LY4

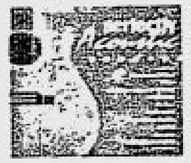
Hey Ya
Outkast
Speaker Boxxx/The Love Below
RINGTONE: N5
POLYTONE: T5
WALLPAPER: C5
LYRICS: LY5

It's My Life
No Doubt
The Singles
RINGTONE: N6
POLYTONE: T6
WALLPAPER: C6
LYRICS: LY6

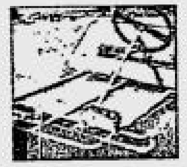
I Promise
Stacie Orrico
Stacie Orrico
RINGTONE: N7
POLYTONE: T7
WALLPAPER: C7
LYRICS: LY7



From The Inside
Linkin Park
Meteora
RINGTONE: N8
POLYTONE: T8
WALLPAPER: C8
LYRICS: LY8



Because Of You
Kyla
Perfectly Acoustic
RINGTONE: N9
POLYTONE: T9
WALLPAPER: C9
LYRICS: LY9



Time Stands Still
The All American Rejects
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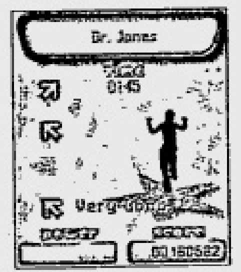

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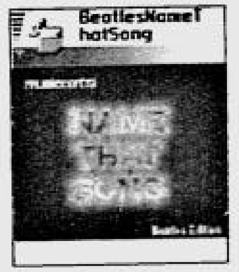

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